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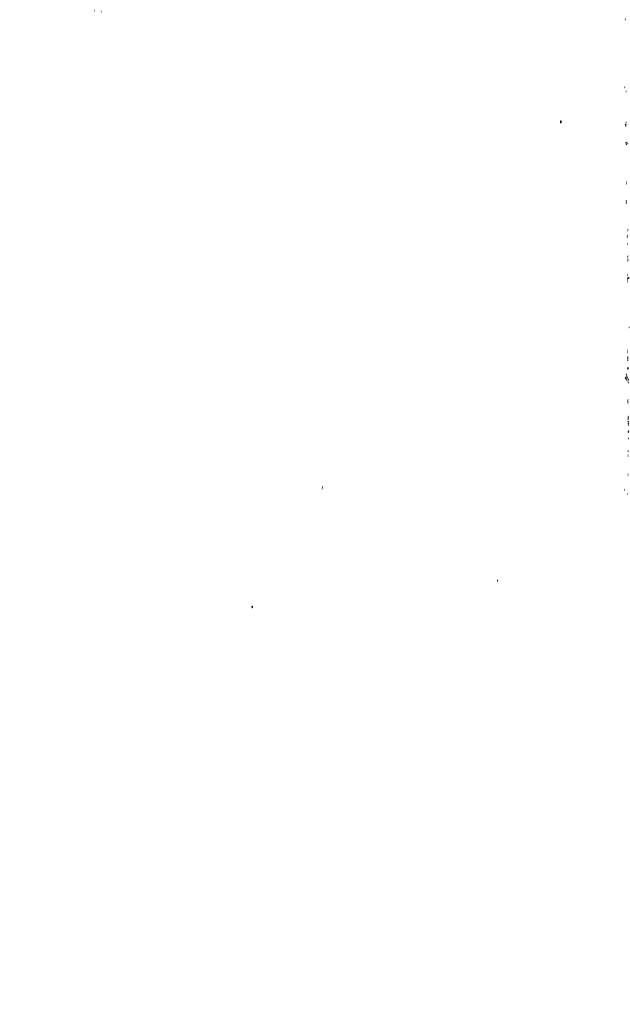
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## LACHT BARPHUKAN AND HIS TIMES



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# LACHIT BARPHUKAN AND HIS TIMES

*A history of the Assam-Mogul conflicts  
of the period 1667 to 1671 A.D.*

By

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TO  
MY ELDEST SON  
CAPTAIN PARVATI KUMAR BHUYAN  
WITH  
AFFECTION AND LOVE

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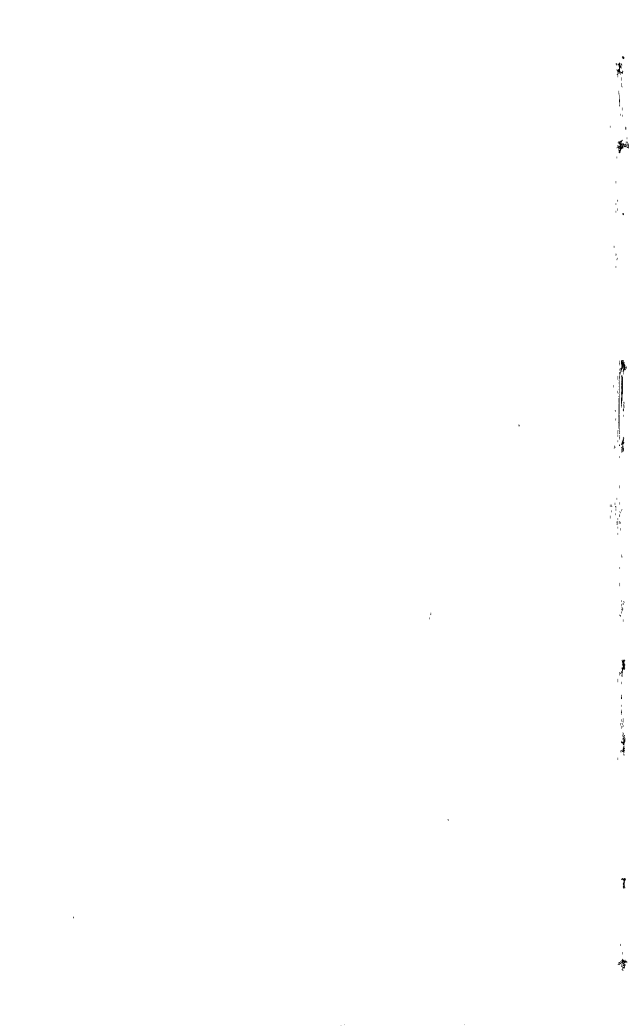


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## PREFACE

A short paper on Lachit Barphukan was read at the first session of the Indian History Congress held at Poona in June 1935. It was warmly received, specially by my Maratha friends who found in the Assamese general a great counterpart of their own national hero Shivaji Maharaja, both of whom and at the same time were engaged in resisting the mighty power of the Moguls, Lachit Barphukan in Eastern India and Shivaji in the Deccan. The paper was partially revised and enlarged, and left at that stage when I proceeded to England in September 1936, from where I returned two years later.

Other preoccupations intervened, and I could come back to my labours on Lachit Barphukan towards the end of 1945, when the termination of World War II enabled many of us to return to our favourite pursuits and studies. I went over again through all the sources discovered mainly through the efforts of the Assam Government Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, and incorporated a mass of new information. Whatever leisure I could command during the last fourteen months has been devoted to the revision and enlargement of this history, and the work in its present form has been completed in the middle of December 1946.

The story of Lachit Barphukan is of absorbing interest to students of Indian History, for it brings into the picture some of the greatest figures of the time—



Emperor Aurangzeb, Shivaji Maharaja, and the Sikh Guru Teg Bahadur—all of whom were directly associated with the events leading to Raja Ram Singha's deputation to Assam. So I have taken great pains in making the narrative as broad-based as possible in order to lay out an accurate background and perspective. This purpose has been followed specially in reference to Raja Ram Singha, a knowledge of whose antecedents and tactics is necessary to understand the significance of his war-measures in Assam, and to properly appreciate the leadership of his antagonist Lachit Barphukan.

The story is also interesting for the revelations concerning the offshoots and ramifications of the Mogul conflicts from the stand-point of the invaded country; and no race in India has preserved such a detailed and systematic record of these reactions and repercussions as the Assamese people, through their contemporary Buranjis or chronicles. What the Mogul commanders did in Assam, what they said, how they behaved, and what difficulties they faced, are all to be found in the Buranjis, and they thus add considerably to the knowledge derived from the Persian chronicles, to which therefore the Assamese Buranjis are indispensable supplements.

The subject of Ram Singha's wars in Assam has been dealt with briefly in Sir Edward Gait's *History of Assam*, and in Sir Jadunath Sarkar's *History of Aurangzeb*, as necessitated by the plan and scope of their monumental works. But the materials available and the importance of the subject call for an independent volume, because the crisis through which the Assamese passed in their conflicts with the Moguls during the four years 1667 to

1671 was a momentous one, and the manner in which they succeeded in overcoming it, magnificent and eternally inspiring.

Very little is known about the past history of Assam though it has produced great warriors, statesmen, poets and reformers. The Assamese people have now fallen on evil days, and their present condition is a poor index of their past achievements. To show the heights to which the Assamese mind could soar under the storm and stress of a national ordeal I have reproduced the utterances of the leaders as preserved for us in the folios of the ancient Buranjis. The ideals enshrined in these utterances, and the plans and measures adopted in consonance therewith will demonstrate that Assamese leadership was not deficient in the qualities which ensure the solidarity and stability of a nation. These qualities are in greater demand now than before as many complex political, economic and social problems are waiting for solution by us as Indians in our coming role of an independent nation. The example of Lachit Barphukan and his selfless compatriots of Saraighat will be a source of inspiration not only to my countrymen in Assam but also to my friends in the rest of India.

I have drawn the Assam portion of the narrative from the Buranjis, both published and unpublished, as enumerated in the Bibliography. The most significant of them is the chronicle *Ram Singhar Yuddhar Katha*, which, as its title indicates, is devoted wholly to Assam's conflicts with the Moguls under Raja Ram Singha of Amber. From internal evidence the author appears to be Samudra Churamani Doloi who, in my opinion, is no other than Achyutananda Doloi, astrologer-in-chief to

the general Lachit Barphukan. Achyutananda was awarded the title of Samudra-khari in recognition of his services in the naval battle of Saraighat. A chronicle compiled by an erudite scholar like Samudra Churamani, who was at the same time an eye-witness and a participator in the events described, cannot but be of the highest value as a source material. But unfortunately, the present manuscript is incomplete, and the narrative ends abruptly long before it comes to the final engagement at Saraighat. The language is archaic owing perhaps to the compiler's desire to be a bit epical and out of the ordinary. The text is very much mutilated, being probably transcribed from a bad copy or by a careless copyist. This chronicle has helped me to introduce a number of vivid and realistic touches. A Note on *Ram Singhar Yuddhar Katha* has been inserted in Appendix IV to this book in order to stimulate interest in the chronicle which may eventually lead to the resuscitation of a second and a fuller copy from some neglected family archive.

I have tried to do full justice to the materials at my disposal ; but I have suffered from the limitations of a research worker at Gauhati,—from the want of a good library, and for lack of opportunities for consultation. How far I have succeeded is left to my readers to judge. It may be mentioned that the present book represents the first attempt at an intensive and scientific study of a period of Assam History centering round a leading personality of the time. Imperfections are therefore inevitable ; but I have been emboldened by the words of the great Cambridge orientalist, Professor Browne,—“He who would write a flawless book writes nothing. . . .

Even the most imperfect book, if it breaks fresh ground, may, though itself doomed to oblivion, prepare the way for a better”.

After the death of Lachit Barphukan, Assam became a hot-bed of dissension and strife, attended by constant changes of kings and ministers, and assassinations of rivals and mutilations of princes. This deplorable state of affairs continued till the accession of the powerful monarch Swargadeo Gadadhar Singha in 1681. The events of these ten years, 1671 to 1681, have been exhaustively dealt with in the present writer's *Atan Buragohain and His Times*, which is going to be published shortly.

I embrace this opportunity of expressing my thankfulness to Seth Mirzamall Agarwalla of the firm of Messrs. Dasuram Mirzamall, an inhabitant of Lachhman-garh in Sikar, Rajputana, and a leading mill-owner and merchant of Gauhati, for contributing towards the expenses of printing this book; to Srijut Madhab Chandra Baroowa of the D.H. A.S. staff for his enthusiastic interest in this publication and for being instrumental in obtaining the above contribution from Seth Mirzamall Agarwalla; to Srijut Umesh Chandra Talukdar of the D. H. A. S. staff for his help in preparing the press copy; to Srijut Suryya Kanta Barpujari, M.A. and Srijut Bhu-pendra Kumar Hazarika, M.A. for occasional assistance; to Maulavi Abul Fazl Saiyid Ahmed, M.A., at present Assistant Director of Public Instruction, Assam for translating into English the sketch of Raja Ram Singha's life from the original Persian text of *Maasir-ul-Umara*; to Mr. M. M. Khambatha, Registrar, Mahakma Khas,

Jaipur, for the Memorandum on Ram Singha ; and to Mr. G. Srinivasachari, Proprietor, G. S. Press, Madras, for his unfailing courtesy and personal interest in the printing of this book.

Gauhati, Assam,  
6th February, 1947.

S. K. BHUYAN.

## LACHIT BARPHUKAN ON SIGHTING THE MOGUL FORCES

Reports began to pour in from all quarters about the numerous character of the invading forces under the command of Raja Ram Singha. Lachit Barphukan climbed to the top of the fortifications to survey the position of the Mogul army encamped in the outlying villages to the west of Gauhati, and asked some of his men to do the same. His own soldiers and those of the reconnaissance party confirmed the reports already received. The Barphukan became perturbed and overwhelmed with a consciousness of the grave responsibility of his task of averting the terrible calamity that was awaiting the fate of his motherland.

"Tears rolled down the Barphukan's cheeks", writes a contemporary eye-witness, "and he said to himself,—'It is a tragedy that my country has to face this dire catastrophe during my Phukanship. How will my king be saved? How will my people be saved? How will my posterity be saved?' As he mused on the situation he became more and more agitated and restless. By a great mental effort, he, however, was soon able to come back to himself. The Barphukan then went round the different camps and units on a visit of inspection, and returned to his base a little later. Shortly afterwards he issued a command directing all his men to fall upon the enemy".

—From *Ram Singhar Yuddhar Katha*.

## RAM SINGHA'S ADMIRATION FOR ASSAMESE COMMANDERS

“Glory to the king! Glory to the counsellors! Glory to the commanders! Glory to the country! One single individual leads all the forces! Even I, Ram Singha, being personally on the spot, have not been able to find any loophole and opportunity!”

—*Raja Ram Singha of Amber, summarising his  
war-impressions in Assam.*

## LACHIT BARPHUDAN AND HIS TIMES

### INTRODUCTION

The name of Lachit Barphukan, has not travelled beyond the frontier of his own country. But in Assam, his nativeland, the recollection of his patriotism has offered the same inspiration as that of Lord Nelson and Wellington in England; Mazzini, Cavour and Garibaldi in Italy; Maharana Pratap in Rajputana; and Shivaji Maharaja in Maharashtra. The limitations suffered by Lachit Barphukan's fame and glory are not attributable to any inferiority of his qualities of leadership in the battle-field; they are due mainly to the lack of publicity which, unfortunately, has fallen to the lot of all the great and good things of Assam, the deeds of her heroic sons, and the contributions and thoughts of her poets, philosophers and saints. Even in Assam, the full details of Lachit Barphukan's career are not commonly known, as they are buried in the folios of old Assamese manuscript chronicles very few of which have seen the light of day.

Lachit Barphukan, the great hero of Assam, was a contemporary of Shivaji Maharaja, and like the latter stemmed the advance of Mogul imperialism in his land. In fact, the Assamese hero's great antagonist was a person most intimately associated with the turning-point in the career of the Maharatta empire-builder, and his presence in Assam at the head of a formidable army was the outcome of the part he had played in that connection. Besides, we have evidence to prove that Shivaji's successes at one time had



supplied an additional incentive to the Assamese to organise an effective opposition to Mogul aggressions in Eastern India.

The study of the life of Lachit Barphukan, specially with reference to his conflicts with the Moguls, enables us to know the qualities which make a successful general, whose main rallying point is not the vastness of his resources or the numerical superiority of his army, but grim determination and intrepid courage, "trusting less in system and policy than to the native spirit of the citizens". Lachit Barphukan brought the Assamese army to the highest pitch of efficiency. Nowhere in recorded history had the Assamese nation shown such capacity for organisation, discipline and combined action as in Lachit Barphukan's war against the Moguls. For four long years the whole nation acted like one man. The slightest indication of slackness and delinquency was promptly and rigorously suppressed. Commanders and statesmen, grown grey in the service of the state, took their orders smilingly from the tender-aged generalissimo. Personal ease and comfort, consideration for one's kith and kin gave way before sleepless vigilance and the long-cherished dream of victory. The stronger elements in the character of the Assamese people were marshalled to the best advantage in offering a united front to the enemy. Not a word was uttered, nor an act done, which was likely to bring a slur upon the prestige of the country or the dignity of the commanders.

For lessons of disinterested patriotism and leadership one should turn again and again to Lachit Barphukan's conflicts with the Moguls. His adversary the Mogul general, overpowered and crest-fallen, uttered the fol-

lowing eulogy of the Assamese, in a spirit of admiration characteristic of the Kuchchwas of Amber: "Glory to the king! Glory to the counsellors! Glory to the commanders! Glory to the country! One single individual leads all the forces! Even I, Ram Singha, being personally on the spot, have not been able to find any loop-hole and opportunity!"<sup>1</sup>

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

To understand fully the bearings of Lachit Barphukan's triumph over the Moguls some knowledge of the political geography of Assam and of the history of the earlier conflicts is necessary. Assam extended in the seventeenth century from the river Manaha on the west, the recognised eastern extremity of the Mogul Empire, to the hills of Sadiya on the east, wherein are situated the several passes leading to Tibet. The length of the kingdom was more than six hundred miles, with an average breadth of fifty to sixty miles. The river Brahmaputra runs through its entire length dividing the kingdom into two banks, the North Bank or Uttar-kul, and the South Bank or Dakshin-kul. Lengthwise it had two main divisions, Western or Lower Assam, from Manaha to Kaliabar; and Eastern or Upper Assam, from Kaliabar to Sadiya. The capital of the kingdom was then situated at Gargaon in Eastern Assam. Lower Assam was governed by a viceroy known as Barphukan whose headquarters were ordinarily at Gauhati; but during its

1. Bhuyan, S.K., *Assam Buranji*, recovered from the family of Sukumar Mahanta, p. 123, henceforward referred to as "*Assam Buranji, S.M.*".

occupation by the Moguls the viceregal headquarters were shifted further up the river to Kaliabar. The forts of Samdhara and Simalugarh, so famous in the Persian chronicles, were situated in the northern and southern banks of the river near Kaliabar. The first opposition to an invading army from the west was offered by the Assamese at Manaha, and the neighbouring forts of Jogi-ghopa and Panchraton. After these stations there was a stretch of smooth sailing up to the hills near Gauhati. If the Gauhati environs were crossed some resistance would be offered at Kajalimukh, 18 miles east of Gauhati, and after that at the Samdhara and Simalurgarh forts. Samdhara was the last rallying point of the Assamese army, and if they were vanquished here the whole territory bordering on the capital would lie at the mercy of the invaders. Hence it was an accepted objective of Ahom strategy to have the issue decided at Gauhati with its natural ring of fortifications, leaving the perilous possibility of another encounter at Samdhara.

On the extremities of the plains on the two banks of the river lie the hoary hill ranges inhabited by people who have still retained their primitive ways of living, and whose alliance with the government at Gargaon was procured by a system of blackmail, and long-standing agreements of friendship. The rulers of the organised principalities in the mountainous regions admitted, directly or indirectly, their allegiance to the Ahom king, and they assisted their paramount lord and sovereign with men and provisions during times of war. The army of the Assamese, consisting of the native population, and their allies and mercenaries of the hill tracts and the submontane regions had a superior advantage over the

army of the Moguls due to their total elimination of luxury and elaborateness in the normal code of their daily life.

The whole population of Assam was a standing militia, manned by a regular gradation of officers, starting from the Baras who commanded twenty men up to the Phukan who commanded six thousand. The intermediate ranks were those of the Baruas or Tin-Hazaris, Hazarikas or chiliarchs, and Saikias or centurions. Every unit of the adult population was directly under a commander, and the chain of administration was so efficiently maintained that a large army could be mobilised at short notice, and relays of reserves stood ready for action either at the headquarters or in their homes.

During the seventeenth century the independence of Eastern Assam remained practically undisturbed, while suzerainty over Western Assam which had first belonged to the Koches, fluctuated between the Ahoms and the Moguls. According to the treaty enacted in 1639 A.D. between the Ahom general Momai-tamuli Barbarua, and the Mogul commander Allah Yar Khan, Western Assam commencing from Gauhati passed into the hands of the Moguls. Jayadhwaj Singha, king of Assam, 1648-1663 A.D., taking advantage of Emperor Shah Jahan's illness and the War of Succession, expelled the Moguls from Gauhati, and chased them down beyond the river Manaha. He also devastated the territory near Dacca and carried off to Assam a large number of Mogul subjects as captives.<sup>2</sup> Cooch Behar had also declared its independence. Aurangzeb having consolidated his

2. Stewart, Charles, *History of Bengal*, p. 319.

position on the throne of Delhi ordered Mir Jumla to invade Cooch Behar and Assam and re-establish Mogul prestige in Eastern India. After having occupied Cooch Behar Mir Jumla entered Assam in the beginning of 1662. He easily repulsed the feeble resistance offered by the Assamese at the garrisons between Manaha and Gauhati. He occupied one garrison after another; and Pandu, Gauhati and Kajali, fell into the hands of the Moguls practically unopposed.

The easy success of Mir Jumla was due to disaffection in the Assam camp. The leading commands and offices were the exclusive monopoly of the Ahoms, a branch of the Tai race, who had conquered Assam in the thirteenth century. King Jayadhwaj Singha had appointed a Kayastha as viceroy of Lower Assam and commander-in-chief of the Ahom army despatched against Mir Jumla. This officer was Manthir Bharali Barua of the Bejdoloi family. He was also appointed Parbatia Phukan.<sup>3</sup> He figures in the Persian chronicles of the period as Bijdili Phukan. This appointment caused bitter resentment amongst the hereditary Ahom nobles and commanders, and the resistance which they offered to the invaders was not worthy of the efficient military organization of the Ahoms, nor of the reputation which they had acquired by repeated success in their enterprises against foreigners; and Mir Jumla's march into Assam was an uninterrupted series of triumphs and victories, though the real secret of his success, namely, defection in the Ahom camp, has not been touched upon by any historian of the expedition.

3. Bhuyan, S.K., *Assam Buranji, S.M.*, p. 93; *Kamrupar Buranji*, p. 64; *Ms. Assam Buranji No. 8*.

The Ahoms, however, recovered their senses when the hostile force reached the neighbourhood of Kaliabar. They concentrated their defence at Simalugarh and Samdhara. "The sky-high fort of Simalugarh, the besieging of which was beyond the powers of masters of lofty designs" was stormed by Dilir Khan Daudzai, the intrepid Afghan commander of Mir Jumla.<sup>4</sup> The Ahoms held out the siege for some time with success. But Langichang Bargohain, the commander of the northern division, having failed to supply reinforcements and provisions to the beleaguered garrison, Dilir Khan succeeded finally in breaking open the entrance, and Mir Jumla himself entered the fort of Simalugarh on February 26, 1662, and expressed his wonder at the fortifications of the place. The Ahom forces at Samdhara on the opposite bank being unnerved by the fall of Simalugarh left their charge without any opposition worth the name. A subsequent engagement at Kukurakata under the personal command of the Buragohain was equally disastrous to the Ahoms. King Jayadhwaj Singha fled to the hills of Namrup, and Mir Jumla entered Gargaon on the 17th of March, 1662.

But Mir Jumla experienced different results during his stay near the capital. The sight of the enemy in the heart of the country roused the incipient patriotism of the Assamese people. Extensive preparations were launched to oust the Moguls from the land, and the king himself directed the operations from his retreat in the

4. Blochmann, H., *Kuch Bihar and Assam*, J.A.S.B., 1872, p. 72, containing a translation of *Fathiyah-i-Ibriah* by Shihabuddin Talish, and portions of other Persian chronicles; *Maasir-ul-Umara*, tr. Beveridge and Baini Prashad, vol. I, p. 498.

Namrup Hills. Detachments of Assamese soldiers used to attack the Moguls at different places and mostly during unsuspected hours. Besides, the interception of their provisions added to the discomfiture of the invaders. The Mogul chronicler who was with the expedition had to admit: "The Amirs turned their eyes longingly to Delhi and the soldiers yearned for their wives and children."<sup>5</sup> A treaty was concluded at Ghilajhari-ghat in January 1663, according to which the Ahoms ceded Western Assam to the Moguls, promised a war-indemnity of three lakhs of rupees and ninety elephants, and an annual tribute of twenty elephants. Besides, the king had to deliver his only child and daughter Ramani Gabharu, as well as his niece, the daughter of the Tipam Raja, to the harem of the Mogul Emperor.<sup>6</sup> The first instalment of the reparations was promptly made over to the Mogul agents. Mir Jumla left Assam in February 1663 after having appointed Rashid Khan as Fauzadar of Lower Assam newly ceded to the Moguls.

The Mogul general took with him 12,000 Assamese followers and captives. Those who accompanied Mir Jumla of their own accord included Baduli Phukan, Maupia, Hari Deka's son, Uddhab Duaria, Dangdhara, and Raghu Kath's son Manohar Kakati. The following Ahom officers were taken as captives by the Moguls, Luthuri Chetia Rajkhowa, Dayangia Bargohain Rajkhowa, Laluk Gohain, and Dighala Rajkhowa. King Jayadhwaj Singha protested against this action of the Mogul general

5. Blochmann, H., *Kuch Bihar and Assam*, p. 68.

6. Ms. Assam Buranji No. 6.

which was avowedly in contravention of the terms of the treaty of Ghilajhari-ghat.

During his stay at Bakata, King Jayadhwaj Singha punished all those who had proved delinquent in their duties during Mir Jumla's invasion, specially those who had deserted the company of the monarch. Such offenders being very numerous it was realised that many persons would lose their lives if the king was allowed to pursue his penal measures; besides, the crime was of a common and wide-spread character. Rajasahur Barphukan, the king's father-in-law, therefore advised the Swargadeo as follows,—“If a few hairs of the head are grey it behoves one to pluck them out; but when the whole head is grey, who ever thinks of that painful operation?” The king thereupon desisted from inflicting further punishments on the score of past remissness and treason.<sup>7</sup>

After the withdrawal of the imperial army from Eastern Assam the Ahom king and his ministers launched extensive preparations to recover their lost territory together with their lost prestige. They maintained at the same time a show of friendship with the Moguls, paying regularly the stipulated instalments of the war-indemnity. Letters were despatched to the Rajas of Cooch Behar, Jayantia and Cachar, in order to organise an anti-Mogul confederacy in Eastern India. They sent back reassuring promises to help the Ahom king in the event of renewal of hostilities.

The Raja of Jayantia and his vassal chief of Nartiang wrote to the Ahom king,—“Jayantia and Gargaon are

7. Goswami, Hemchandra, *Purani Assam Buranji*, p. 129.



not separate and divisible. At your discomfiture at the hands of the Moguls I am feeling as if my own country has been harassed and humiliated by the enemy. What pains me most is the fact that I was living in peace and comfort while your country was overrun by the Moguls, and that I had no opportunity to order ten to twenty thousand of my stalwarts to run to your aid in your emergency. God has done what He had desired to do. The Moguls have simply invaded your country; they have not been able to hold it under their domination permanently. The land, the people are all intact, as well as you august self. Measures should now be concerted to organise more effective co-operation between ourselves so that we may wreak vengeance upon the Moguls.”<sup>8</sup> Prana Narayan, Raja of Cooch Behar, now wrote to Jayadhwaj Singha,—“You lost your kingdom and so I lost mine. As we did not harbour evil intention towards each other both of us have now regained our lost territory. You should not feel distressed at having temporarily lost your dominion since Ramachandra, Suratha and Yudhisthira could not escape similar calamities. But their prestige has not been affected as they regained their kingdoms by dint of their exertions. Our prestige will suffer only if we remain inactive in the matter of regaining our territories. As you have written, we must act in a manner that will lead to the establishment of our friendly relations.”<sup>9</sup> The Ahom king wrote back to Raja Prana Narayan,—“You have said well by asking me to exert myself in order to regain the independence of my kingdom. Even if the sun is once eclipsed

8. Bhuyan, S.K., *Jayantia Buranji*, pp. 22-25.

9. Ms. Assam Buranji No. 8.

does it not make its appearance again? We are making preparations according to our might, and I trust you will also make the necessary preparations. When fire and wind act in unison they take no time to clear the forests by burning the trees and grasses. So we can also defeat and destroy our enemy by establishing an effective alliance between us two.”<sup>10</sup>

Just when preparations for a fresh war had made considerable progress Jayadhwaj Singha breathed his last in November 1663. The old chronicles are unanimous in permanently attaching a stigma to his name for abandoning his charge and taking flight to the hills when Mir Jumla approached the capital Gargaon. He is popularly known as “Bhagania Raja” or the Deserting King. But when we recognise what he did to oust the invaders from the land, converting his disaster on the battlefield to a prelude for the recovery of his nation’s moral force and productive energy, we may regard his temporary discomfiture as the most fruitful of victories. Jayadhwaj Singha’s death-bed injunction bears testimony to his patriotic intent. He summoned his ministers to his side and said,—“My condition is grave and serious. You should be of one mind and purpose, and direct your efforts towards restoring your devastated country to prosperity and peace. Appoint some one as your paramount lord and protect the people according to the traditions of the land. It should be your earnest endeavour to extract from the nation’s bosom the spear of humiliation fixed upon it by our enemy the Moguls.”<sup>11</sup>

10. Ms. Assam Buranji No. 8.

11. Ms. Assam Buranji No. 8.

## THE AHOMS RESOLVE TO FIGHT.

Jayadhwaj Singha was succeeded by his uncle's son Chakradhwaj Singha, and with his accession commenced a new era in the Assam-Mogul conflicts. The new king was mortified at the reduction of his kingdom to the position of practically a vassal state of the Moguls. Western Assam was in the hands of the Moguls, and a large portion of the war-indemnity still remained undelivered for which the Ahom king had to receive threatening letters from Syed Firoz Khan, the new Fauzadar at Gauhati. Emperor Aurangzeb had presented a *khelat* or robe of honour to Chakradhwaj Singha, and the imperial envoys who carried them to Gargaon insisted on the king's donning them in their presence. King Chakradhwaj Singha could no longer stand this grave humiliation. He shouted out from his throne,—“Death is preferable to a life of subordination to foreigners. I have to surrender my independence for a suit of sewn garments!”<sup>12</sup> In March 1665 the king summoned an assembly of his ministers and nobles and ordered them to devise and adopt measures for expelling the Moguls from Western Assam, adding,—“My ancestors were never subordinate to any other people; and I for myself cannot remain under the vassalage of any foreign power. I am a descendant of the Heavenly King, and how can I pay tribute to the wretched foreigners.”<sup>13</sup>

King Chakradhwaj Singha contemplated immediate resumption of hostilities. But his impetuosity was

12. Bhuyan, S.K., *Kamrupar Buranji* p. 80; Ms. Assam Buranji No. 7.

13. Ms. Assam Buranji No. 10, No. 15.

checked by the timely warning of the Prime Minister, Atan Buragohian Rajmantri Dangaria, who pleaded for time to properly train the army and to collect a sufficient stock of food provisions and war materials so that hostilities might be continued for a considerable number of years.

The Premier Atan Buragohain addressed the king and his counsellors on this occasion as follows;—"It is the legitimate duty of a sovereign to restore the old limits of his dominions by defeating and destroying his enemies. His success in war can alone enhance his glory and renown. So, His Majesty's proposal is just and proper. We have been enjoying absolute and uninterrupted sovereignty from time immemorial, and the high-handed imperiousness of the Moguls has transcended the limits of our forbearance. His Majesty has only voiced the sentiments of his ministers when he declares that we should fall upon the Moguls this very moment if possible. But we must provide the army with sufficient quantity of food provisions and war materials, and must hold in stock sufficient reserve to enable us to replenish the stores of the expeditionary army as soon as they become empty. This task of supplying reinforcements will become a matter of frequent occurrence.

"The country has become depopulated owing to the flight of the villagers from their homes during the last war with Mir Jumla. His Majesty has recently procured their return to their country and settled them in different places. We shall have to enquire whether these people have been able to obtain their rice and food. Rice is the most indispensable of all the necessaries of life ; and if it fails nothing will succeed. The officers who have to

supply the allotted quota of boats, sailors and provisions, will now assert, on enquiry being made by Your Majesty, that they have got all the equipments ready, and that they will be able to deliver them whenever they will be required to do so. But it may be they will fail just at the time when we shall badly need them; and nothing will come out even if we kill or chastise the officers in default. We shall have to face dire disaster in the eventful failure of boats and provisions. Unless we have sufficient surplus in the store at present how shall we meet the situation if war has to be prolonged for two or three years? We must take the necessary steps now and arrange for all future contingencies. In the event of failure of supplies even torture or death will not help us in overcoming an emergency.

‘A *kari paik*, or a humble subject of Your Majesty, buys an earthen pot to boil his coarse rice for the trifling sum of two *cowries*. Lest the rice and the pot, the total value of which will not, in any case, exceed twenty *cowries* or one pice, be spoiled, he tests the soundness of the vessel by striking it with the fingers at the bottom and the sides two or three times before making the purchase. A bird erects a nest on high where she hatches to life her young ones. She takes them round from one bough to another after they have grown up a bit. They are brought down to the ground when they can fly. If they are let loose before they become full-fledged they are eaten up by dogs and jackals. The mother-bird leaves them only after they can pick up and eat their food themselves.

“Similarly, when the three batches of rowers, posted at the middle and the two extremities of Your Majesty’s

barge, strike their oars simultaneously, the sight becomes beautiful to look at, the oarsmen feel inspirited, the boat moves swiftly, and the helmsman wields the steering with ease and comfort. But, if on the otherhand, there is no harmony and synchronism in the strokes of the three batches of rowers, the helmsman is inconvenienced in steering his shaft, the boat does not make any headway, and the spectators are far from being delighted. If the king directs his measures on the lines indicated above then only he will be able to vanquish his enemies and extend his territories to the old limits."<sup>14</sup>

The farsighted counsel of the Prime Minister roused the monarch to a consciousness of the realities of the situation. He enquired of Jayananda Tam-Doloi as to the quantity of war materials deposited in the royal arsenal. As the question was put in the open court, Jayananda said that there was plenty of provisions in the store. But when the king retired to the inner apartments Jayananda apprised him of the true state of affairs, saying,—“We do not possess even a single box of gunpowder. As regards shots and pellets we have not got in store even four boxes, nor do we possess even a stack of arrows. As Your Majesty put the question to me in the presence of the assembly at the court I deliberately submitted an encouraging though misleading report, because a contrary version will demoralise our own people and gladden the heart of the enemy.”<sup>15</sup>

The Premier's suggestion was accepted by the king and his council, and preparations on an extensive scale

14. Goswami, H.C. *Purani Assam Buranji*, pp. 133-134; Ms. Assam Buranji No. 7, No. 10, No. 15.

15. Ms. Assam Buranji No. 7.

continued for two long years. The king personally looked after the training of the soldiers, and instructed them with his own hand as to the proper method of plying bows and other weapons of war. The king encouraged the recruits under training by giving them presents of women, silver, cloth, milk, fish, salt and rice.<sup>16</sup> Cultivation of paddy and other food-grains was conducted under state supervision. The arsenals and the smithies, now located inside the palace enclosure, worked night and day. In addition to preparations for land-fighting the Ahoms constructed a number of war-vessels where cannon could be mounted, in addition to a large fleet of ordinary boats. To secure greater efficiency a regiment of 1,000 soldiers was split up into two battalions of 500 soldiers in each. Each such battalion was manned by a Hazarika or an Ek-Hazari commander. A Phukan was placed in charge of a contingent of 6,000.<sup>17</sup> When preparations were complete the expeditionary force marched past the king in their final manoeuvres, and Chakradhwaj Singha expressed satisfaction at their dash and gallantry.

Now came the business of selecting a commander of this vast army. There were intrepid commanders in the rank and file of the Ahom nobiliary. But a commander of an ordinary stamp would not satisfy the purpose of the tremendous issues at stake. Besides, the three cabinet ministers, the Buragohain, the Bargohain and the Barpatra Gohain, who could make and unmake kings, not to speak of all officials of the state, were entrusted with important commands in the expedition. The general must be a man of unusual capacity and intelligence who

16. Ms. Assam Buranji No. 7, No. 10.

17. Ms. Assam Buranji No. 5.

could obtain the ready co-operation of the flowers of the land. To avert collision of interests the general would also be entrusted with the civil administration of that portion of Western Assam which still remained in possession of the Ahoms, *viz.*, the territory between Kaliabar and Gauhati. The king and his ministers deliberated long on this subject, and even took recourse to the customary priestly advisers. The selection ultimately fell upon Lachit Barphukan, Assam's man of destiny.

### LACHIT BARPHUKAN APPOINTED GENERAL

Who was this Lachit Barphukan?—He was the youngest son of Momai-tamuli Barbarua, Assam's general in the Mogul wars of the reigns of Emperors Jahangir and Shah Jahan. Momai-tamuli had risen from a humble position in life to the office of the Barbarua, which combined the functions of the Chief Executive Officer and those of the Lord Chief Justice of the land.

Sukuti, better known in history as Momai-tamuli, was at first an ordinary bondsman pledged to serve under his nephew for a sum of four rupees. One day he was working with his hoe in a field by the side of the road to the Ahom necropolis at Charaideo, raising bunds for storing rain-water. The nephew used to call him *Momai*, the term by which a maternal uncle is addressed in Assam; and Sukuti was popularly known as Momai amongst the persons of the locality. The Ahom king Swargadeo Pratap Singha, 1603-41, passing by that road saw Momai at work, and was pleased at the trimness of Momai's operations in the paddy-field. The king who had a keen eye for merit released Sukuti from his obliga-



tions to his nephew, and appointed him first at Tipamia Rajkhowa, and afterwards as Bar-tamuli or superintendent of the royal gardens.<sup>18</sup> Momai-tamuli rose from one office to another till he was appointed Barbarua. During the wars with the Moguls, Momai-tamuli was appointed commander-in-chief of the Ahom forces. He was instrumental in enacting the famous treaty with Allah Yar Khan in 1639 which was the basis of Ahom-Mogul relations for decades to come. His foresight and courage was a great asset to King Pratap Singha. A Mogul envoy had once reported to his master: "O Saheb, what do you say of Assam? The king is a veritable Mahadeva, and Momai-tamuli is Mahadeva's chief henchman or Nandi. As long as these two wield the affairs of Assam it is impossible to turn your face to that country."<sup>19</sup> Momai-tamuli's daughter Pakhari Gabharu had been married to King Jayadhwaj Singha, and Ramani Gabharu, consort of Sultan Azamtara, third son of Emperor Aurangzeb, was the child of this union. Momai-tamuli had several sons all of whom held important positions in the state.

The present economic life of the Assamese people is mainly the result of the measures inaugurated by Momai-tamuli Barbarua. In 1608 A.D., he organised the functions of Assamese officers and fixed the quotas attached to each. Baras, Saikias, Hazarikas, Baruas, Rajkhowas and Phukans were created on the lines of the Mogul mansabdari system, modified by the customary gradation of officers prevalent in Assam from ancient times. Momai-tamuli was also entrusted with the task of recon-

18. Ms. Assam Buranji No. 8.

19. Ms. Assam Buranji No. 7, No. 8.

structing Assamese village life on a sound and secure economic footing. Villages were grouped into regular units for convenience of administrative control. Spinning and weaving on the part of the womanfolk was made compulsory in every Assamese home, and it is for this farsighted policy of Momai-tamuli Barbarua that weaving is now universal among Assamese ladies irrespective of caste, creed or social status. Every village was made self-complete by being provided with the usual quota of artisans, priests and other functionaries. Economic independence was also the goal of family life in Assam, every family producing its own necessities.<sup>20</sup>

Momai-tamuli's extreme sense of duty is illustrated in an episode recorded in contemporary Assamese chronicles. During his incumbency as governor of Lower Assam, he received a letter from the Kachari Raja Indrabal Narayan in which he was addressed as "Nam-jani Raja" or the King of Lower Assam. Momai-tamuli regarded this as a great insult to his liege-lord King Pratap Singha. He reported the matter to the king at Gargaon, who wrote back,—“The Kachari Raja has designated my officer the Barbarua as Raja. It only shows the high regard which he entertains towards me, the paramount sovereign. He certainly does not mean any offence. Please dismiss his envoys with rich presents.”<sup>21</sup>

The secret of Momai-tamuli's rise to power and eminence was his surpassing sense of duty, and extreme

20. Ms. Assam Buranji No. 7; Indibar Barua's *Jivanadarsa*, life-sketch of Momai-tamuli Barbarua.

21. Bhuyan, S.K., *Assam Buranji*, S.M., pp. 77-78.

loyalty and devotion to his master. However high or humble his duties might be he devoted himself wholeheartedly to their accomplishment. He was true to himself and his ideal, and he drew his inspiration from the pleasure of perfection attained in his enterprises and undertakings, apart from any consideration of personal gain or advantage. Lachit Barphukan inherited from his father this supreme sense of duty, and the capacity for self-effacement in the cause or enterprise he undertook. If Lachit Barphukan had written his autobiography he would have admitted: "From my father I learnt to be dutiful and love my work, and to forget myself in the ecstasy derived from a faithful and conscientious discharge of the trust imposed upon me."

As regards Lachit's early education his father's court-room in his metropolitan residence supplied a regular training camp and university. As Barbarua, Momaitamuli had his usual establishment of subordinate officials and clerks who helped him in the transaction of state business at his own house, in deciding upon revenue and judicial complaints, receiving foreign envoys and discussing problems of state-craft and diplomacy. He had allotted duties at the secretariat, and the king's tribunal and household; but there was always plenty of business at his own house the results of which he had to place before the full cabinet for discussion and confirmation. The young Lachit saw and listened to all that passed in his father's official residence. Besides, it was customary for Ahom nobles to appoint efficient teachers for the education of their sons to perpetuate high appointments in the family. Learned Pandits were attached to all the great families who imparted knowledge of state-craft

based on the Ahom classics as well as the Hindu Dandani-ties and Arthasastras, of the history of the country and of administrative precedents. As the son of the Bar-barua Lachit had frequent opportunities of attending the court. It is also recorded that Lachit was made the scarf-bearer of the Premier, a position equivalent to a Private Secretaryship, which has been regarded every-where as the first step in the career of an ambitious dipolmat and politician. The scarf-bearer's first duty was to carry the bundle of betelnuts and important documents of his master, and as such he had admission to royal audience and cabinet sittings attendance at which was a matter of special prerogative. Lachit had thus the opportunity of supplementing what he had learnt at his father's court-room by a knowledge of the more important affairs transacted by the Premier and his colleagues.

Military training was not excluded from the education of noble men's sons, as there was no water-tight demar-cation in those days between the civil and the military, and every officer, even a judge and a priest, had to take up arms if demanded by the exigency of the situation. The several ancient Ahom families constituted the steel-frame of the administration, which naturally imposed some versatility of equipment in its members. The Lukhurakhun clan to which Lachit belonged was of very ancient origin, as its founder had come to Assam with the first Ahom conqueror Sukapha. The members of the Lukhurakhun clan had allotted functions con-nected with the funeral of the Ahom monarchs.

About the physiognomy and features of Lachit Bar-phukan we do not possess the evidence of any contem-porary portrait. There is, however, preserved in an old

chronicle a meagre pen-picture of the general along with that of the other commanders of the expedition. The chronicler dismisses the general with a touch or two while he points out the distinctive features of his colleagues. Thus says the chronicler,—“At the foot of Itakhuli was Lachit Phukan. His face is broad, and resembles the moon in its full phase. No one is capable of staring at his face.”<sup>22</sup>

The various offices held by Lachit before his appointment to the supreme command of the army are not exactly known. But we know positively of three offices held by him. He first served as Ghora Barua, or Superintendent of the Royal Horses. In this capacity Lachit had broken all the turbulent ponies, till he made the king's riding expeditions as tame an affair as sitting in his own household chair. Lachit served for some time as Dulia Barua, and as Simaluguria Phukan or commander of the levy ordinarily stationed at Simaluguri near the capital. He was then made Dolakasharia Barua, or Superintendent of the Guards accompanying the king when he went out sitting on his sedan. The Dolakasharias served also as police constables, and their Barua's position was equivalent to that of a present-day Inspector-General of Police. Though the rank of a Phukan is higher than that of a Barua, the new post conferred upon Lachit the advantages of limelight. During the invasion of Mir Jumla Lachit had engaged the hostile army at Dikhowmukh with considerable success.

At the time of his appointment as commander-in-chief Lachit held the office of Dolakasharia Barua. The king

summoned him to his presence when he was sitting on his royal sedan ; and in order to test the efficiency of the general-elect he asked Lachit to instruct the Dulias or sedan-bearers about the performance of their duties. Lachit stood the ordeal well ; and the king broached the subject to Lachit, saying,—“The enemies are in our immediate neighbourhood. How will it be possible to capture their leaders Syed Firoz and Syed Sana ? The man whom I am going to appoint as general must be endowed with unusual grit, stamina and depth of judgment.” To this Lachit replied,—“Could it be that there is no fit man in Your Majesty’s realm ? What are the enemies ? They are after all ordinary mortals. Shall we not find similar men in our own country ? Your Majesty should only confer the dust of your feet, and the man equal to the occasion will be readily found.”<sup>23</sup> The king immediately resolved to put Lachit at the head of the expedition. The king’s selection was confirmed by his ministers and advisers.

Before formally announcing the appointment the king wanted to have a fresh proof of Lachit’s gallantry and sense of self-respect. Lachit was summoned to the royal presence ; and as he was kneeling down before His Majesty an attendant from behind the screen rushed into the audience-chamber according to a pre-arranged plan, and snatched off Lachit’s head-dress, the removal of which in those days, and even now, was regarded as a grave insult. Lachit, provoked to extreme anger, unsheathed his sword and ran to take off the head of the miscreant. The attendant took shelter under the king’s

seat whereto he was chased by the irate Lachit. The king then intervened, and expressed his satisfaction at Lachit's unsophisticated courage. Lachit was formally installed as general and Barphukan. The king presented him a gold-hafted sword and the customary paraphernalia of distinction.<sup>24</sup>

King Chakradhwaj Singha had, during the course of his preparations, despatched agents and emissaries to distant lands to ascertain the movements of the Mogul army, and the successes they had been attaining in their various expeditions. The king felt humiliated no doubt at the sight of his country's plight; but in the history of a country which had repeatedly thwarted the attempts made by Muhammadans to establish their sovereignty, since the invasion of Muhammad Bin Bukhtiyar Khiliji, their solitary discomfiture at the hands of Mir Jumla was a matter of no grave concern, provided their humiliation was a temporary blot in the escutcheon of their country's glory. Chakradhwaj Singha was not unnerved, as he had firm faith in the potentialities of his race. Shivaji's successes against the Moguls in the Deccan during the period 1663 to 1665 were regarded by Chakradhwaj Singha as a fitting opportunity for his own projected enterprise. In a letter written to the Raja of Cooch Behar, dated 24th Magh, 1587 *saka*, or near about February 7, 1666 A.D., King Chakradhwaj Singha stated: "You have sent the verbal message informing me that war has commenced between Shewa [Shivaji] and the Moguls, and that Shewa having defeated the Moguls has pushed them back to a distance of twenty days' march;

that Daud Khan has fallen, and Dilel [Dilir] Khan is wounded, and that the Badshah has come from Delhi to Agra. It cannot be predicted as to who becomes vanquished and who becomes victorious. You have further informed me that you are engaged in putting your forts and dikes in order; and you have asked us to strengthen our fortifications and to train our soldiers. It is meet and proper that you should give us such advice and encouragement. Because the Moguls have humiliated us once, does it follow that we should make no attempt to throw off this position of subordination to them? They have discomfited us once, and we have dealt them severe blows on repeated occasions, and of this fact you are fully conversant.”<sup>25</sup>

### GAUHATI RECOVERED FROM THE MOGULS

The preparations were fully completed in the summer of 1667, and the army were waiting for the signal for departure. The customary religious rites connected with the initiation of a campaign were performed according to Ahom and Hindu priestly codes.

King Chakradhwaj Singha gave valuable presents to the commanders of the expedition, and delivered to them the following message,—“I desire that your wives and children, and the cows and Brahmans should be duly protected and preserved; and that I should also acquire the prestige and reputation of having vanquished the Moguls. If you prove incompetent in the task of defeat-



ing the enemy at Itakhuli you shall not be let off with impunity. And, do you think that there will be paucity of Phukans and Rajkhowas like yourselves ?”<sup>26</sup>

On Thursday, Bhādra 3, 1589 *saka*, or near about August 20, 1667, the Ahom army started from the capital and sailed down the Brahmaputra in two divisions. They encamped at Kaliabar, the viceregal headquarters, from where they conducted their war-operations against the Moguls. Syed Firoz Khan, the imperial governor of Gauhati, and his army were not prepared for such an eventuality, and there was no time for the arrival of fresh reinforcements from Rangamati and Dacca, with the result that the Ahoms gained a series of victory over the enemy.

The first shot of the campaign was fired by the Dihingia Phukan when he attacked the Bahbari fort near the Barnadi on the north bank of Gauhati. The fort of Kajali was easily captured and its inmates massacred including five sardars. The enemies were also defeated in the north bank. After having thrown two stockades at Shahburuj or Manikarneswar Hill opposite Gauhati, the Ahoms directed their efforts towards the capture of Gauhati. An imperial detachment issued out of Itakhuli, or Sukreswar Hill at Gauhati, and attacked one of the Ahom garrisons at Shahburuj. During the encounter that followed Betmela, son of Kalanchu Sandikoi, displayed matchless courage and valour. The engagements on the north bank were not favourable to the Ahoms, but the Phukans in charge of the operations held fast to their commands in remembrance of the oaths they had taken before their sovereign.

The Ahom army on the south bank were, however, successful in their fighting. Their chief objective was the capture of Itakhuli which is a small hill on the south bank of the Brahmaputra at Gauhati, from which one can command a panoramic view of the river from Agiathuti Hill on the west to the Kurua Hills on the east. The Moguls had concentrated their men and provisions in the Itakhuli fort, and its occupation was a matter of great difficulty. An Ahom commander named Pelan Phukan was reported to have said,—“I shall be the bondsman of the soldier who can capture the Itakhuli fort.” This remark was communicated to the king at Gargaon, and orders were despatched to rip open the heart of Pelan Phukan for displaying a defeatist mentality and thereby betraying a lack of confidence and courage. The Gauhati commanders unanimously asserted their ignorance of any such remark dropping from Pelan Phukan's lips.<sup>27</sup>

The king's intention produced, however, the desired moral effect. The commanders gathered up their courage and fell upon the fort of Itakhuli during the latter hours one night; the spies had already rendered the Mogul cannon ineffective by putting in water in their muzzles. The imperialists then advanced with a fleet of boats and attacked Itakhuli from the river, but they could not stand the incessant cannonade of the Ahoms. At midnight, on Thursday, Kartik 17, 1589 *saka*, or November 2, 1667 or near about, Itakhuli and the contiguous garrison of Gauhati fell into the hands of the Ahoms. During the

27. Ms. Assam Buranji, No. 10; Dutta, S.K., *Assam Buranji*, pp. 28-29.

attack on Itakhuli two female warriors on horseback issued out of the Mogul camp, but being pusued by the Ahoms they crossed the river and landed themselves at Aswakranta. The victors took possession of the elephants, horses, guns, coins and all other articles which they found at the imperial stores at Gauhati. The enemy was chased down to the mouth of the Manaha river, the old boundary between Assam and Mogul India. Several Mogul fugitives including Syed Firoz Khan, the Fauzadar of Gauhati, and Syed Sana Sirdar Mir-Bakshi were captured by the Ahoms. Some of the prisoners were executed and the rest sent up to Gargaon. The Ahoms also succeeded in bringing back the Assamese subjects who had previously been taken as captives by the Moguls during the expeditoin of Mir Jumla.<sup>28</sup>

Thus within the short space of two months the Ahoms succeeded in recovering their lost possession and along with it their lost prestige and glory, and this was due mainly to the determination and courage of the Ahom king Chakradhwaj Singha. On receiving the news of victory the king cried out,—“It is now that I can eat my morsel of food with ease and pleasure.”<sup>29</sup> He despatched appropriate presents to the victorious generals at Gauhati enjoining upon them to remain ever-vigilant and cautious as the resumption of hostilities with the imperialists was a foregone conclusion. Chakradhwaj Singha then proceeded in person to Biswanath and performed there a colossal sacrifice in the way of thanks-

28. Dutta, S.K., *Assam Buranji*, pp. 28-29. Firoz Khan, Ex-Fauzadar of Gauhati is mentioned here as having died in captivity.

29. Bhuyan, S.K., *Assam Buranji*, S.M., p. 211.

giving to the gods for conferring upon him the honour of a victory.

The success of the Ahoms in recovering possession of Gauhati and Lower Assam forms a momentous chapter in the history of their conflicts with the Moguls. It is given due prominence in the contemporary chronicles, and is also mentioned in inscriptions on stone and cannon. A stone pillar found at Gauhati bears the following inscription in Sanskrit: "The Barphukan of Namjani [Lower Assam], son of the Barbarua, lived with glory in the *saka* year 1589 [1667 A.D.] after having attained victory over the Yavanas [Muslims,] who were equipped with various war-weapons, elephants, horses and captains. The person of the Barphukan is adorned with every ornament, and his heart is enlightened with a knowledge of the various branches of learning. He is beautified by attractive qualities which are also free from the evils of the Kali-yuga. The Barphukan shines effulgent in his prowess; and is the commander of elephants, horses and soldiers. He is the ocean or receptacle of the highest forms of fortitude, self-respect, valour, and depth of judgment and gravity."<sup>30</sup> An inscription on a cannon found at Silghat, near the Simalugarh fort in Nowgong District, refers to the recovery of the weapon by King Chakradhwaj Singha after having "destroyed the Yavanas in battle in *saka* 1589."<sup>31</sup>

30. Goswami, H.C., *Barphukanar Jayastambha*, Alochani, vol. VII, pp. 480-481.

31. Gait, Sir Edward, *Report on the Progress of Historical Research in Assam*, Shillong, 1897, p. 29; *History of Assam*, p. 147.

There are two inscriptions on a boulder at Kanai-barasi-boa-sil in North Gauhati, on the eastern extremity of a rampart known as Phulungar-garh. Both the inscriptions are in Assamese, the first one at the base of the boulder, and the second at a height of eleven cubits from the first. The lower inscription reads as follows: "The rampart has been constructed by Swarga-narayandeva Maharaja's ministers Bahgaria Burgo'hain, Neog Bar-phukan, Bahguti Gohain Phukan, Buragohain Phukan, Dihingia Rajkhowa and Numali Dekka-Barua after having vanquished Saidya Piroj, Month of Aghon, *saka* 1589." The upper inscription which is perhaps a revised and supplementary version of the first reads as follows: "Bahgaria Buragohain, the minister of Swarga-narayan-deva Maharaja, constructed the rampart in conjunction with the Barphukan, Bargohain Phukan, Buragohain Phukan, and Dihingia Sandikoi Phukan. Month of Aghon, *saka* 1589."<sup>32</sup>

The reoccupation of Gauhati by the Ahoms was followed by strenuous preparations on their part for retaining possession of what they had acquired. The best brains of the country, whether in statesmanship or war-craft, were now concentrated at Gauhati. They deliberated on the measures they should adopt for successfully encountering the Moguls. It was realised that the fortifications of Gauhati must first be strengthened so that men and provisions could be safely accommodated within their limits. The established character of the settlement at Gauhati rendered that place extremely suitable for a

32. Goswami, H.C., *Kanai-barasi-boa-silar gadya, Alochanā*, VIII, pp. 112-113, 535-536.

war-base from where, to quote the words of Lachit Barphukan,—“They could fight as if they were sitting in their own homes.” Samdhara near Tezpur was therefore abandoned in favour of Gauhati.<sup>33</sup>

Atan Buragohain was appointed by the king to erect the necessary fortifications on both banks of the river, and Lachit Barphukan was asked to post a contingent of soldiers at each strategic point under the command of an able officer. The civil administration of Kamrup was organised on a sound footing, and Chaudhuris and Patwaris were appointed to realise the stipulated *jaigiri-dhan* or land revenue.<sup>34</sup>

The administration of the Parganas of Kamrup was vested in Ahom officers as follows:—

Directly under the Barphukan,—Parganas Pati-Darang, Barbhag and Bangeswar.

Under the Paniphukan,—Khata and Banbhag.

Under the Duara Phukan,—Pubpar and Paschimpar.

Under the Deka-Phukan,—Sarubangsar, and Kachari-mahal.

Under the Chetia Phukan,—Ramsa and Sarukhetri.

Under the Dayangia Rajkhowa,—Bar-khetri.

Under the Tar-Salagarua Rajkhowa,—Chayania.

Under the Gajpuria Rajkhowa,—Barhanti.

Under the Dikhowmukhia Rajkhowa,—Chamaria.

Under the Pani-Salaguria Rajkhowa,—Nagarberha.

Under the Pani-Dihingia Rajkhowa,—Bagaribari.

33. Bhuyan, S.K., *Assam Buranji*, S.M., p. 117.

34. Ms. Assam Buranji No. 14.

Under the Tarua-Dihingia Rajkhowa,—Barpeta.

Under the Namdangia Rajkhowa,—Barnagar.

Under the Pani-Abhoypuria Rajkhowa,—Bajali.

Under the Bar-Abhoypuria Rajkhowa,—Bekeli.

Under the Saru-Abhoypuria Rajkhowa,—Bausi.

This arrangement continued till the reign of Gadadhar Singha, 1681-96, when, as a result of the conspiracy set on foot by the Phukans and the Rajkhowas in charge of the Parganas to seize the person of the Ahom viceroy Gargayan Sandikoi Phukan, the governors of the Parganas were withdrawn from their respective charges and their administration became thenceforward the direct responsibility of the Barphukan.<sup>35</sup>

Lachit Barphukan used to inspect the passes and defiles in the neighbourhood of Gauhati on the pretext of hunting. Guns were mounted at appropriate intervals on the bastions in the ramparts, and also on the hills, hill-slopes and valleys, each under the charge of trained artillerymen. The art of erecting improviso walls on the banks of rivers, and stockades in the midst of waters, was brought to perfection during this period. Commanders were posted to cover the whole area from Pandu to the extremity of the Asurar Ali on the south bank, and from Sarai to Kurua on the north. The Barphukan personally remained in charge of the headquarters at the foot of Itakhuli, while the Buragohain remained at the Lathia fort in charge of the army on the north bank. Thus the Ahoms stood ready for action for fresh encounter with the imperialists.

35. These facts have been obtained from the unpublished portion of the chronicle *Assam Buranji*, S.M.

## RAJA RAM SINGHA SENT AGAINST ASSAM

In December 1667 the Mogul Emperor received intelligence of the capture of Gauhati by the Ahoms, and he at once resolved to despatch a strong army to re-establish Mogul prestige in the North-East Frontier. He selected Raja Ram Singha, son of Mirza-Raja Jai Singha, partly on account of his able generalship and partly as a punishment for his alleged connivance at the escape of Shivaji and the Sikh Guru Teg Bahadur from custody. The odium to which Ram Singha had been subjected by the deprivation of his rank and also the privilege of appearing at court so mortified Jai Singha, the princely Kuchchwah of Amber, who had rendered such distinguished service to the Moguls, and whose warlike fame resounded from Kandahar to Bengal and from Bengal to the Maratha country, that he could not long survive his son's humiliation and disgrace. After the death of Jai Singha at Burhanpur on July 2, 1667, Ram Singha was taken back into the Emperor's favours and created a Charhazari, and then despatched to Assam which was regarded in Mogul traditions as the grave of generals, more so after the death of Nawab Mir Jumla. On December 27, 1667, Ram Singha was presented by the Emperor with a *Khelat* consisting of a gilded saddle and a dagger with a belt adorned with pearls.<sup>36</sup> On January 6, 1668, he received formal orders from the Emperor appointing him commander of the Assam expedition. The Emperor informed Ram Singha that he had issued orders to his Prime Minister Jafar Khan Umdat-ul-Mulk for the supply of provisions for the troops, and directed

36. *Alamgir-namah*, quoted by Blochmann, J.A.S.B., 1872, p. 97.



the Raja to get possession of the Gauhati fort after the rainy season was over, and promised to send more troops to him.<sup>37</sup>

Ram Singha could not however forget his treatment by the Emperor and he came to Assam with a heavy heart; and Aurangzeb's selection of a disaffected general to lead an expedition in the remote recesses of India was doubtless an act of questionable wisdom; and no one realised it better than the shrewd Emperor himself as he appointed several Muslim officers, Mira Said Saif Dewan, Mir Raji Dewan, Bahlol Khan Daroga of 700 Jasols, Sultan Ali Daroga of 300 Ahadis and Mir Gazar Beg Hazi Waqayanavis, to watch and report on the doings of the Hindu Raja lest he would enter into a collusion with the king and officers of Assam.<sup>38</sup>

The nucleus of Ram Singha's army consisted of 21 Rajput chiefs, 4,000 troopers in his own pay, 1,500 gentlemen-troopers or *ahadis*, and 500 artillerymen, and with reinforcements from Bengal his total army swelled upto 30,000 infantry, 18,000 Turkish cavalry, and 15,000 Koch archers. His commanders included Raja Indramani, Chadmend Khan commander of 2,500, Alam Khan Dui-Hazari, Bakram Khan Dui-Hazari, Dewan Sayid Gazap Khan Ek-Hazari, Kayam Khan, Zulel Beg, Raja Prithu, Raja Manik, Mir Gazraf Khan Beldari commander of 2,500; Nasiri Khan, Kirat Singh Bhurtiah, Raghunath Singh of Mirthah, and Bairam Deo Sisodia; as well as the following commanders of Cooch Behar,—Raja Jai-

37. Memorandum on Ram Singha obtained from Mr. M. M. Khambatha, *vide* Appendix II to this book.

38. Bhuyan, S.K., *Annals of the Delhi Badshahate*, paragraph 119, Islamic Culture, Hyderabad, Deccan, for January 1934.

narayan, grandson of Parikshit, Kavisekhar Barua, Sarveswar Barua, Manmath Barua and Ghansyam Bakshi. He also brought with him the Sikh Guru Teg Bahadur who was then living at Patna, and five Moslem Pirs to undo the effects of Kamrupi black arts. He halted for a few days at Dacca where he was cordially received and entertained by the governor, Nawab Shaista Khan, who happened to be a close and intimate friend of the late Raja Jai Singha. At Dacca the Rajput Raja received reinforcements from the Bengal command, which included a force of 2,000 soldiers.<sup>39</sup>

Shaista Khan, the aged brother of the world-famous Mamtaz Begam, could not escape some measure of the resentment of his nephew and Emperor, specially after his escape from the Poona fort on April 5, 1663, attended by the loss of his thumb. His appointment to the governorship of "the penal province of Bengal, a hell well-stocked with bread," was meant as a punishment for his negligence and incapacity displayed in conducting the war against Shivaji. Shaista Khan having met Ram Singha bound for Assam, dilated on the dangers of an Assam expedition, the noxious airs of the witchcraft-laden land of Assam, its poisonous waters, its dense and impenetrable forests, the cunning of its women, and the strategy and diplomacy of the Ahom commanders.<sup>40</sup> The Nawab himself was not very optimistic about the success of Ram Singha; and it transpires from the records that the existence of an independent kingdom in the immediate

39. Sarkar, Sir Jadunath, *History of Aurangzeb*, III, p. 213; J.A.S.B., 1872, p. 97; H. C. Goswami's *Purani Assam Buranji*, pp. 138-139; Ms. Assam Buranji No. 7.

40. Ms. Assam Buranji No. 7.

neighbourhood of Bengal was not entirely disliked by Shaista Khan, as it naturally raised the prestige and importance of the Bengal governor.<sup>41</sup>

Rashid Khan, Ex-Fauzadar of Gauhati, was also ordered to join Ram Singha's army as the lieutenant of the Rajput Raja, as it was the practice of Aurangzeb to depute a Muslim commander as well whenever the sole charge of an expedition was placed in the hands of a Hindu general, and specially when the enemy was a Hindu himself. Previously to this Dilir Khan Daudzai was sent with Jai Singha in the expedition against Shivaji. Emperor Aurangzeb justified Rashid Khan's participation in the Assam expedition by saying, "Rashid Khan, you should join the war against Assam. You had been there before with Majum Khan [Mir Jumla], and you know the language and customs of the Ahoms."<sup>42</sup>

The leadership of Raja Ram Singha of Amber in an expedition to Assam awakened the Assamese to a consciousness of the necessity for more arduous preparations. The house of Amber, the hereditary supporters of Mogul imperialism, and their military skill and valour were known all over India. Ram Singha's participation did not produce feelings of consternation in the hearts of the Assamese, it only convinced them that the ensuing campaign was going to be a strenuous game as compared with the preceding war, the war of recovery. Thus there ensued a new phase in the Assam-Mogul conflicts, the

41. Bhuyan, S.K., *Assam Buranji, S.M.*, p. 121; *Mir Jumla and Ram Singha in Assam*, Journal of Indian History, Madras, December 1926.

42. Goswami, H.C., *Purani Assam Buranji*, p. 138.

defensive war of retaining possession of Gauhati and the territories up to the Manaha. The disposition of the Ahom army was arranged on a new basis. The fortifications of Gauhati were further strengthened, and Lachit Barphukan did not spare any one if his orders were not strictly and promptly carried out. His own maternal uncle was entrusted with the construction of a rampart near Amingaon on the north bank. As the work was not finished within the fixed time Lachi executed his uncle saying.—“My uncle is not greater than my country.” This rampart is still known as Momai-kata-garh.<sup>43</sup> This sternness produced the desired effect upon the army, and averted all possibilities of slackness and delinquency.

### THE ASSAMESE PLAN OF DEFENCE

Ram Singha reached the frontier garrison of Rangamati in February 1669. The Assamese commanders met at Gauhati and offered their prayer to the temple of Kamakhya,—“O mother, eat up the foreigners, and protect all our people.”<sup>44</sup> Lachit Phukan issued an order that every man must do his duty by holding fast to his charge, and if any remissness was detected on the part of any commander or soldier his head would be taken off at once, and the possibility of royal intervention would come up afterwards. The formation of phalanxes was based on

43. Barua, Sarbeswar, *Lachit Barphukan* in Rai Bahadur Padmanath Gohain-Barua's biographical anthology *Jivani-samgraha*, I, p. 92; Kirtinath Bardoloi, *Sandipika*, p. 155, extract from an old Buranji. This exclamation of Lachit Phukan designates the superiority of public duty to private interest. Lachit Phukan has proved very inspiring to the Assamese.

44. Ms. Assam Buranji No. 12.

a new principle; the kit, uniform and armoury of a soldier were fixed on the irreducible minimum basis. On the earthen ramparts in the plains a soldier was posted at an interval of nine feet, and on the hills after every thirteen-and-a-half feet. The length of each *pali*, and the number of different types of guns to be mounted in each, together with the number of bastions, were rigidly defined; and the relative distances of the hills and ramparts were also carefully measured and recorded. The materials necessary for constructing forts on sands were specified to the minutest detail. An officer with his personal detachment was placed in charge of a fixed portion of the fortified zone. The effect of all this was to render the fortifications an impenetrable wall of defence. The arrangements arrived at after nature deliberations at the war-council were reduced to writing to serve the purpose of a staff manual so that they might be automatically carried out involving the least disturbance to the general scheme of defensive measures.<sup>45</sup>

A unit of command including the jurisdiction apportioned to a commander was known in Assamese as a *pali*. Each commander was provided with a contingent of fighting men, and the requisite quantity of weapons and ammunitions, and other provisions. He had also at his beck and call a number of commando soldiers, known as *chor-bachas*, literally, the pick amongst the spies, who were employed in the collection of information regarding the movements and intentions of the enemy, in measures

45. Lekharu, Upendra Chandra, a list of the military outposts and fortifications of Assam, compiled about 1681, from a fragmentary Ms., *Avahan*, vol. II, pp. 248-250, 441-450; Ms. Assam Buranji No. 4.

connected with the security of the detachment to which they were attached, and in performance of acts which required extraordinary courage and tactfulness. *Palis* were constituted to cover the whole line of fortifications on the south and the north banks of the river Brahmaputra without any break or loophole. The *palis* were reorganised in 1669, to fit in with the scheme of operations against the invading Mogul army under Raja Ram Singha, and they were constituted as follows :

*On the south bank :* The whole area was under the direct command of the generalissimo Lachit Barphukan. His camp was situated at the foot of Itakhuli or Sukreswar Hill in Gauhati. He was armed with a sword and a bow, and he wore a war-cap.<sup>46</sup> His face was broad, and it resembled the moon on the fullmoon night, and no one could dare to look at it.

Khahua Patra Gohain-Phukan of the Bargohain family, was in charge of the *pali* from Amrajuri to Pandu.

Luthuri Chetia Opar-Dayangia Rajkhowa, from Rangali-buruz to the western steps leading to the Kamakhya temple, with 80 chor-bachas. He was equipped with a war-pony, a war-cap, a sword, and a bow and a spear.

Latum Dolakasharia Barua, from the western steps of Kamakhya to Duar-garila, with 360 chor-bachas. He

46. In Ms. Assam Buranji No. 12, the equipment of each soldier is described as consisting of,—“two stacks of arrow, two quivers, one bow, two torches, one shield, one *chaktalia* (?) for wearing on the body, one *bar-chata* (umbrella?) in front, one pair of *chak* (?). The soldiers on the front row were each given two bundles of *chaks* for the matchlocks. The F... this kit, and others followed suit.” Accordi... means the pointing of a gun or arrow, an... equipment must be some article necessary for firing a gun.

was tall in stature, and was equipped with a pony and a sword. He wore a *gati* or a cloth tightly wrapped round the body with the two ends made into a knot near the waist.

Barcheng Gohain, from Duar-garlia to Paraghopa, with 360 chor-bachas. He had a sharp sword in his hand.

Thakua Bandukial Bargohain, from Paraghopa to Dhenukhiria, with 80 chor-bachas. He had a sword in his hand.

Bethabar Hazarika Lekai Chetia, son of Lechai Kari, from Gotanagar to Fatasil, with 60 chor-bachas. He carried a sword and a spear, and wore a war-cap. He was short and stout, and dark-complexioned.

Neog Gohain, from Fatasil to the head of Asurar Ali, with 60 chor-bachas. He was short and small in stature, and was quick in his movements. He carried a spear and a curved sword in his hands, and wore a war-cap.

Hatrai Kaliabaria Gohain-Phukan of the Bargohain family, on the Asurar Ali, with 100 chor-bachas. He was slim in size, and swift in pace; and he carried a *dao* and a spear, and wore a war-cap and a *gati*. He rode on a sedan while supervising his pali. He was fearful to look at.

Lahman Marangi-khowa Chetia of the Bargohain family, on the hill situated to the south of Asurar Ali, with 100 chor-bachas. He was slim in size, and dark and shining in complexion. He wore a war-cap, and a *gati* of the colour of a black pigeon. He carried a sword

in his hand, and moved about shouting out his orders and instructions.

Jatichandan Namdayangia Rajkhowa of the Bargohain family, on the hill known as Usha-haran Parvat, with 80 chor-bachas. He was ruddy in complexion; his eyes were copper-coloured; and he was fearful to look at. He wore a war-cap and a buffalo-coloured gati. He carried a sword and a bow.

Chakrapani Matbar Tar-Salaguria Rajkhowa of the Buragohain family, son of Bar Hazarika, from Usha-haran Parvat on the road known as Obhota-simalur Bat, with 80 chor-bachas. He was greyish in complexion. He walked through his pali with swift pace. He carried a sword, a bow and a thick club.

The following commanders guarded the waters of the Brahmaputra on the south bank:

Namdangia Rajkhowa was in charge of the stockades erected on the river. He had under him 104 sets of watchmen and sailors.

Chetai Pani-Salaguria Rajkhowa, son of Tangachu, with 80 chor-bachas.

Tangachu Dikhowmukhia Rajkhowa, with 80 chor-bachas.

Kalanchu Sandikoi Neog, with 80 chor-bachas.

*On the north bank:* The Prime Minister Bahgaria Atan Buragohain Rajmantri Dangaria was personally in charge of the command on the north bank of Gauhati. His camp was situated at Lathia Parvat, and he had with him 80 chor-bachas. The Buragohain was tall in stature, and his strides resembled the steps of a goose. His face was broad, and he had two moles on the forehead. He



was ruddy in complexion. He wore a buffalo-coloured gati, and carried a big sword in his hand.

Sen Gohain Bar-Abhaypuria Rajkhowa of the Bargohain family, was in charge of the pali from Juria to Sarai, with 80 chor-bachas. He was tall in stature, ruddy in complexion, loud and resonant in his voice, quick in his pace, and fearful to look at. He wore a black gati, and a war-cap; and carried a *dao*, a bow and a spear.

Majiu-Abhaypuria Rajkhowa, the nephew of Phul Barua, was encamped in front of Sarai with jurisdiction extending up to Kekuri. He had with him 80 chor-bachas. He was slim in size and handsome in appearance. He wore a buffalo-coloured gati, and a war-cap; and carried a sword, a bow, two torches, and two *chaks*. He used to move swiftly in his pali. He had reddish hair and eyes. While moving to and fro he betrayed an attitude of grim defiance of the enemy.

Haribar Saru-Abhaypuria Rajkhowa of the Lanma-kharu family, from Kekuri to Lathia Parvat. He was slightly squint-eyed. He moved about swiftly in his pali.

Miri-Sandikoi Phukan, from Lathia to Chila Parvat, with 100 chor-bachas. He was in charge of both Bar Chila Parvat and Saru Chila Parvat.\* He was dark in complexion, had reddish eyes, and was very swift in pace. He did not like to remain still and quiet in any particular spot, and wanted to be constantly on foot. He was fearful to look at. He carried a sword and a bow, and wore a gati.

Hazarika Barua guarded one portion of Saru Chila Parvat, and Neog Barua the remaining part. Each of

them had 50 chor-bachas. They both looked fearful, and moved about swiftly with swords uplifted. They carried bows on their sides.

Sarujana Duara Lechai Tarua-Dihingia Rajkhowa, from Chila Parvat to Sindhurighopa as far as the road known as Khara-garua Ali, with 120 chor-bachas. He moved about on foot with the gravity of an elephant. He was ruddy in complexion, and had a broad chest and a slender waist. He carried a *dao* in his hand and a bow on his side, and wore a war-cap.

Charingia Pelan Phukan, from Khara-garua Ali to Rangmahal, with 120 chor-bachas. His arms and his feet were short and stout. He was greyish in complexion, and was fearful to look at. He carried a *dao*, a bow and a shield; and wore a buffalo-coloured gati and a circular cap.

Dhauwa Gohain Gajpuria Rajkhowa, from Rangmahal to Adamar Sil, with 100 chor-bachas. He was short and small in stature. He carried a sword and a spear; and wore a war-cap and a buffalo-coloured gati.

Moran Gohain, the brother of the king, from Adamar Sil to Kanai-barasi-boia Sil, with 80 chor-bachas.

Rup Sandikai, also known as Sadiya-khowa, from Kanai-barasi-boia Sil to Shah-buruz, with 100 chor-bachas.

Baghchowal Barpatra Gohain, at Kurua, with 120 chor-bachas. He was ruddy in complexion, and he made himself felt wherever he went. He carried only a sword in his hand. His *pali* was situated in a low-lying land.

The elder brother of the Raidangia Phukan, near the pali of the Barpatra Gohain, with 80 chor-bachas. He was very handsome in appearance.

The waters on the north bank of the Brahmaputra were guarded by Pani-Dihingia Rajkhowa, nephew of the Dihingia Phukan, with 80 chor-bachas; and Bura-gohain Phukan with 100 chor-bachas.

The following officers were also entrusted with important commands on both the banks, but their palis cannot now be ascertained with any degree of accuracy: Kamalakanta Abhaypuria Rajkhowa of the Bargohain family; Haladhar Duara, son of Phul Barua; Dayangia Rajkhowa, son of Luthuri; Chaudang Barua of Papang family; Raidangia Phukan; Cheregual Phukan; and Dihingia Phukan.<sup>47</sup>

Vigilance is the price of freedom, and Assamese spies had followed the footsteps of Ram Singha's army since their departure from Delhi. The news of Ram Singha's departure from Dacca was promptly communicated to Lachit Barphukan. On Ram Singha's arrival at Rangamati the Ahom commanders stationed at Manaha attempted to oppose the advance of the enemy. There were a few skirmishes, but the Assamese could not attain any success. Ram Singha had brought with him 1,000 war-hounds, and they used to snatch off our soldiers under the smoke of gunfire even from the latter's position in the fighting lines. As they did not approach the Assamese lines in packs, they could be killed only one

47. Bhuyan, S.K., *Assam Buranji*, S.M., pp. 112-113; Ms. Assam Buranji No. 5, No. 12. The personal touches are to be found only in Ms. Assam Buranji No. 12.

or two at a time.<sup>48</sup> The Assamese were not prepared for such an eventuality and they left their frontier garrisons and sailed down to Gauhati. The Barphukan realised the futility of opposing the enemy at the outlying forts on the frontier, and adopted a new objective in the plan of his defensive measures.

The Barphukan, in order to lure the invaders into the war-zone of Gauhati, surrounded by hills on all sides with forts and garrisons at regular intervals, despatched three Rajkhowas to Manaha to seduce the enemy into the neighbourhood of Gauhati. Ram Singha entered unopposed the waters of Assam, and the absence of resistance on the part of the Assamese was attributed by Ram Singha to their inaction and fear. The detachments of the Rajkhowas sailed up the river remaining within the sight of Ram Singha's army; but outside the range of the Mogul cannon. At night the Rajkhowas encamped on the river banks. Trunks of plantain trees were posted in their camps with a torch on each. Early in the morning the Assamese contingents boarded their boats and resumed their sailing in advance of Ram Singha's fleet, thus giving impression of the retreat of a vast army. Ram Singha flattered himself by thinking that he was as fortunate as his predecessor Mir Jumla in having an easy march up the river Brahmaputra. On the sixth day two attendants of the Assamese commander Dihingia Rajkhowa were left behind in their camp asleep. They were captured by Ram Singha's men and produced before their general. Ram Singha ordered their release and

48. Ms. Assam Buranji No. 12.

said,— “Go back to your master the Barphukan, and ask him to give me a fight for an hour.”<sup>49</sup>

The Barphukan's announcement that he would take off the heads of delinquents without waiting for the orders of the king smacked no doubt of Spartan sternness, and it caused terror in the hearts of all including Atan Buragohain. As executions involving the shedding of blood could be undertaken only under the authority of the king the Barphukan's announcement amounted to an abrogation of royal prerogatives. The Barphukan's threat which was perfectly justified in view of the emergent situation was reported to King Chakradhwaj Singha when he was sitting in full court. The king proposed to give his opinion later. He consulted his ministers at night, during the course of which the queen whispered from behind the screen that the people would be saved and the country would be victorious only if the Barphukan was allowed to act according to his announcement. The king also averred his support to the Barphukan's proposed line of action. The messengers were rebuked for having brought the report.<sup>50</sup>

The Barphukan had one day seen in a dream a tall and fair-complexioned lady with the upper lip touching the sky and the lower touching the underworld; her tongue pointed towards the Moguls while the Assamese legions with the commanders were stationed behind her. The Barphukan asked the two Hindu astrologers Churamani and Sarobar, and the Ahom Machai Phukan to interpret the dream. They affirmed in one voice that

49. Bhuyan, S.K., *Assam Buranji*, S.M., p. 113.

50. Ms. Assam Buranji No. 12.

the dream meant the destruction of the Moguls and the victory of the Swargadeo. This dream helped to create confidence in the Assamese camp about the ultimate victory of their arms.<sup>51</sup>

But Lachit Barphukan was not a man to allow superstitions to interfere with his plans of war, or install himself in a position of self-complacency engendered by over-confidence. He tried to form an accurate estimate of the strength of his adversaries. He had received reports of the numerous character of the Mogul army advancing towards the environs of Gauhati ; and he personally verified the report by himself surveying the position of the enemy from the top of his fort in the company of a few other men. Tears rolled down the Barphukan's cheeks, and he said to himself,—“It is a tragedy that my country is facing this dire catastrophe during my Phukanship. How will my king be saved ? How will my people be saved ? And how will my posterity be saved ?” This momentary sorrow did not however make him lose his heart : he soon came back to himself and applied himself with redoubled vigour to the task of defending his motherland.<sup>52</sup>

## RAM SINGHA DEMANDS THE EVACUATION OF GAUHATI

Lachit Barphukan had realised fully that postponement of the open encounter would enable him to bring his preparations to perfection in the light of the enemy's

51. Ms. Assam Buranji No. 12.

52. Ms. Assam Buranji No. 12.

superior strength. A few more stockades on the Brahmaputra sands had still to be erected. In any case a few days' delay was desirable from all points of view. Lachit Phukan sent the following reply to Ram Singha,— "Tell Raja Ram Singha that we want to know why he has come to our country. Besides, war is not the only method of settling issues. We have four avenues mentioned in the political scriptures,—conciliation, gifts, dissension and open rupture. One proves to be a knowing man if he can tune his measures to the exigency of the situation." Firoz Khan, Ex-Fauzadar of Gauhati, now a prisoner of the Ahoms, was released and Lachit Barphukan sent him to Ram Singha with the above message.<sup>53</sup> Ram Singha demanded through Firoz Khan the restoration of the limits fixed in 1639 between Allah Yar Khan and Momai-tamuli Barbarua, adding,— "I, Ram Singha, a descendant of Raja Makunda, have taken the field in person. The Barphukan is also a man of consequence, being the son of the Barbarua. He should be prepared to give me an hour's fight. If he is short of war materials he should ask of me, and I shall concede."<sup>54</sup>

53. Obviously, Syed Firoz Khan, Ex-Fauzadar of Gauhati, who had been a prisoner of the Ahoms, had been temporarily released for diplomatic negotiations. On his return from the Mogul camp he was taken to Latasil, and then to Kaliabar, vide S. M., p. 114. In S. K. Dutta's *Assam Buranji*, p. 82, Syed Firoz's son Pahar Khan fled from captivity. According to Ms. Buranji No. 6, Ram Singha demanded the release of Syed Firoz's son. According to *Alamgir-namah*, Syed Firoz Khan, the Gauhati Thanadar, and most of his men bravely defended themselves, "and sacrificed their lives on the path of duty", J.A.S.B., 1872, p. 97. The episode of Firoz Khan appears at present to be a bit confusing.

54. Bhuyan, S.K., *Assam Buranji*, S.M., p. 96.

To this Lachit Barphukan replied: "Well, Firoz Khan, tell my friend the Raja of Amber, that he cites the authority of the treaty between Allah Yar Khan and my father Momai-tamuli Barbarua, yet Gauhati and Kamarupa do not belong to the Moguls. We have taken possession of the place by turning out the Koches.<sup>55</sup> It was through mere chance that it fell into the hands of the Moguls for a few seasons. Now God has been pleased to give it back to us. When He pleases to give it to our brother-sovereign the Mogul Emperor he will then get Gauhati, and not before that. As for his request to give him fight for an hour, I would like to say that we are prepared to fight as long as there remains a drop of blood in our veins. He has also expressed his willingness to give us war-materials. He has come over a long distance undergoing fatigue in his journey, and the provisions may be inadequate for his own purpose. Our Majesty the Heavenly King has nothing unavailable to him. If the Rajput Raja falls short of materials, let him ask me, and I shall try to oblige him."<sup>56</sup>

Firoz Khan again became a prisoner of the Ahoms after he came back having delivered the message. Ram

55. This claim is based on the fact that Koch Hazo, including the present Mangaldoi Sub-division, Kamrup and Goalpara, originally formed part of the dominions of King Naranarayan of Cooch Behar, who allotted it to his nephew of Parikshit. In the 17th century the mastery was divided between the Koches, the Moguls and the Ahoms as in continuous occupation of the Moguls from 1639 to 1658. In the latter year the Ahoms captured Gauhati from the Moguls, and then "marched against the Koches and, after a slight check, defeated them twice and drove them across the Sankosh. They thus became the masters of the whole of the Brahmaputra Valley",—Gait's *History of Assam*, 1906, pp. 55, 65, 126.

56. Bhuyan, S.K., *Assam Buranjis*, S.M., p. 113.



Singha sailed further up the river and encamped at Hazo on the North Bank, at a distance of fourteen miles to the north-west of Gauhati. Ram Singha despatched from Hazo an astute messenger to Lachit Phukan with a bag of poppy-seeds and with the following message: "The Barphukan should evacuate Gauhati. Our army is as numerous as the poppy-seeds in this bag." To this the Barphukan sent a counter-reply with a tube filled with sands,—“The poppy-seeds if pounded down will become a thin paste. Our army is as numerous and indissoluble as the sands in the tube despatched herewith.”<sup>57</sup>

Lachit Barphukan's message was carried by two envoys Nim and Ramcharan. Ram Singha, in order to tempt and amaze the Assamese envoys, contrived a number of wooden birds to fly hither and thither inside his audience-chamber. Ramcharan begged of Ram Singha to give him one such bird; and he was given two instead. Lachit Barphukan chained Ramcharan with iron fetters for being a suppliant at the door of the enemy. Nim protested against accompanying such covetous men in embassies to foreign courts.

In the meantime a traveller named Hangalbhangha Laskar, who had lived for some time in Ram Singha's camp, fell into the hands of the Ahoms. He was on his way to Gauhati to see Rajendra Chakravarti of Kulihati, near Hazo, then living with the Barphukan as a priest and well-wisher. The Laskar was forced to communicate the impressions of the Mogul commanders at the sight of Assam's preparations; and he accordingly reproduced Ram Singha's conversation with his lieutenant

Rashid Khan : "Forts have been constructed by the Ahoms on tops of hills, and the outlying plains are also too narrow for the purpose of an open engagement. It is for this reason that the Assamese had proved invincible in their wars against foreigners. The fortifications are intricate and complex, and to each fort there are three passages. The enemy is beyond the reach of our heavy artillery; and there is no opportunity for fighting with arrows and guns. Their ministers, commanders and infantry are all to be admired for having constructed such an impregnable wall of defence." On hearing this the Premier Atan Buragohain Rajmantri Dangaria promulgated this message to the army: "You are to note carefully that at the sight of our fortifications demoralisation has already started in the enemy's camp. His enthusiasm is already on the wane." To this he got this response from his officers and men,—“The Barphukan should only remain inviolate in his command, and we shall fight to the last drop of our blood.”<sup>58</sup>

In March 1669, the Emperor on the occasion of his birthday raised the rank of Ram Singha to that of a Panch-Hazari. On Chaitra 21, 1590 *saka*, or near about April 3, 1669 A.D. Ram Singha marched up to Agiathuti on the river bank. Rashid Khan pitched his tent facing the Ahom fort at Sarai or Amingaon. The guns on both sides began to discharge their contents. Ram Singha's nephew was killed by an arrow ; and a cannon-shot made a breach in the tent of the Rajput general. The battle ended without any decisive result. Ram Singha invited Rashid Khan to his tent to confer on the situation. Rashid

58. Bhuyan, S.K., *Assam Buranji*, S.M., pp. 114-115 ; Ms. Assam Buranji No. 5.

Khan was enjoying a musical *soiree* with dancing and high revelry. He refused to obey his chief's command; and on the other hand despatched a friendly letter to the Ahom commander Miri Sandikai. Ram Singha could not brook the growing impertinence of Rashid Khan. He cut off the ropes of Rashid Khan's tent and the latter marched further into the interior and halted<sup>1</sup> at Dalibari. A friction had already been developed between Ram Singha and Rashid Khan. Ram Singha protested against Rashid Khan blowing the Nahbat in the same manner and as many times as himself, as Rashid Khan was a subordinate commander and some distinction must be maintained in the use of their privileges. To this Rashid Khan had rejoined: "We have both been despatched by the Emperor to conduct the war in Assam. Why should there be a distinction in the use of the Nahbat?" Ram Singha attributed Rashid Khan's desertion to a possible collusion with the Ahoms. Rashid Khan subsequently retired with his detachment to Hazo.<sup>59</sup>

### RAM SINGHA'S ATTACKS REPULSED BY THE AHOMS.

Ram Singha then approached the fort at Sarai through an underground passage constructed by himself. The Ahoms filled the surrounding moat with water. Ram Singha mounted his guns on temporarily erected platforms and commenced firing on the Ahom fort causing some breaches in the walls which, however, were immediately repaired. The Mogul general retreated from the

59. Bhuyan, S.K., *Assam Buranji*, S.M., p. 37.

attack being unable to stand the counter-volley of the Assamese guns.

During the rainy season of 1669 there was no perceptible progress in the campaign. The Mogul army was divided into four divisions and waited for opportunities to break open the entrances to the Gauhati fortifications at four different places. The waters were guarded by the naval commanders Mansur Khan, Latif Khan, Rasip Khan, and some Firinghees and one Kapidan Raja; on the south were stationed Ali-akbar Khan, Mir Sayid Khan, Raja Indramani, Raja Jaynarain and Marul Khan Sardar; the general Ram Singha had personally remained in front of the Ahom fortifications in the north bank; at the Sindurighopa entrance were posted Jahir Beg, Kayam Khan, Ghansyam Bakshi, and the three Baruas of Cooch Behar—Kavisekhar, Sarveswar and Manmath with shieldsmen and archers numbering 15,000 strong. The Moguls effected a breach at Rangaliburuz near Pandu on the south bank of the river. But the ever-watchful vassal chief of Rani had received timely information of the project which he had reported to the local Ahom commander. A number of men with materials had been kept ready for repairing the breach; and the rapidity with which the repairs were executed surprised the invading force. Having failed to destroy the fort the Moguls began to fire their cannon. Here also they did not achieve better results. They gave up their intention and retreated from the neighbourhood of Pandu. The Rani Raja captured some of the fugitives and sent them up to the Barphukan after having chopped off their fingers. The captives were next sent up to the

king at Gargaon who awarded suitable presents to the Rani Raja.<sup>60</sup>

In June 1669 the Moguls under Raja Sujan Singha and Raja Rupnarayan engaged the Ahom army at Kaljor Hill. The Ahom commander Miri Sandikai Phukan promptly erected some stockades and fought with the enemy for nine days. The Moguls then made an attempt to enter into Gauhati by the route through Darrang; and a detachment of 2,000 horse, 200 infantry, and 200 musketeers, manned by Bahlol Khan, Prannarayan, Kavissekhar Barua and Raja Sura Singha, dashed towards the Bahbari or Bahgora fort at the mouth of the Barnadi opposite to Gauhati. The Rani Raja who had already reported this move to the Barphukan lured the contingent to a narrow pass between two hills and fell upon them all on a sudden. The Moguls were put to the rout with heavy casualties and enormous losses in provisions and other articles. The Rani Raja thus frustrated the efforts of the Moguls to enter Gauhati through Darrang. Encouraged by this triumph the Ahoms under the command of the Dihingia Phukan attacked the Moguls both by land and water near the Sesa river in the vicinity of Agiathuti. The Ahoms were first victorious in the attack and captured a large number of Moguls as well as a large quantity of their provisions. Ram Singha then personally appeared in the field and inflicted a crushing defeat upon the land-force of the Ahoms who now dashed into the water, where also they were pursued and slain. Several Assamese war-boats were captured by the Moguls. The Ahom commanders then retreated to their respective

60. Bhuyan, S.K., *Assam Buranji*, S.M., p. 116; Ms. Assam Buranji No. 5, No. 14.

forts. The king was greatly aggrieved to hear of the defeat of his army and despatched orders to the Barphukan and the Buragohain to press close upon the enemy and recover the captured vessels.

In the meantime the monsoons had broken out with torrential showers which were very favourable to the Ahoms but quite the contrary to the invading force. The enemy's camps became detached from one another due to the unexpected intervention of the floods. The situation was exactly parallel to that experienced before by Mir Jumla near Gargaon: "A similar case had never happened in the history of Delhi. There were 12,000 horse and numerous infantry locked in for six months, prevented by the rains from continuing operations, and yet scarcely attacked by the enemies that surrounded them."<sup>61</sup> In the case of Ram Singha also the engagements before the rains were of a defensive character as far as the Ahoms were concerned. They had not yet aggressively attacked the Moguls. Lachit Barphukan had waited for the exhaustion of the enemy's provisions and the reduction of their numbers by pestilential diseases. The delay would also enable him to bring his preparations to the desired perfection. He thus encouraged a state of siege though of a very restricted character as his communications with other parts of the kingdom had remained uninterrupted.

Sporadic engagements accompanied by proposals of peace continued during 1669 and 1670. Once the Mogul army advanced towards the fort of Rangmahal in the north bank which was then commanded by Pani-Dihingia Rajkhowa Buragohain Phukan, generally known as

61. *Fathiyah-i-Ibriyah*, tr. Blochmann, J.A.S.B., 1872, p. 88.

Gohain-Phukan. The Mogul soldiers marched under the cover of tall screen-plates tied to the legs of horses from where they issued out at the approach of a hand-to-hand fight. The Ahoms could not attain much success in the early stage of the attack and they lost two captains, the sons of Ghora Sandikai and Anantarai.

Gohain-Phukan then introduced a new device in the formation of his phalanxes. The four outer rows of each column were occupied by elephants with screened howdahs, with spearsmen, musketeers and archers, while in the depth of the file were ordinary soliders wearing black uniforms. The newly formed Assamese phalanxes proved impenetrable walls of defence, and the Moguls had to withdraw their forces from the attack without attaining any tangible result. Ram Singha who had been watching the operations from a safe retreat proposed to the Assamese envoy Bhakatdah to have a sight of the Gohain-Phukan, and the latter replied,—“Instead of me I shall show him twenty thousand of my stalwarts who shall pound the Raja’s soldiers to a thin paste.”<sup>62</sup>

The Assamese continued at the same time their guerilla attacks with unabated vigour. They would come out of their forts and fall upon the enemy unawares, invest them if they could, and in the event of their repulse they would hurry back to their respective retreats. Ram Singha’s appellation for these attacks was “Thieves’ affairs.”

In August and September 1669 there ensued a series of naval engagements. The Moguls with their war-boats, each equipped with sixteen cannon, dashed towards the

river stockades of the Ahoms. The Barphukan himself took the field at the head of his naval contingent and fell upon the enemy. The casualties on the side of the Moguls were very heavy. On another day Samudra Churamani Doloi and Sarobar Doloi, the two astute astrologers accompanying the Ahom army, were crossing the Brahmaputra in a war-boat, when suddenly they were attacked in the middle of the river. A clod of blood emitted by a wounded soldier fell upon the body of Sarobar, and he fainted, while his comrade Samudra Churamani saved himself by erecting a wall of defence inside the boat with twenty shields stripped off from the bodies of dead soldiers. The astrologer noticed with his own eyes the havoc caused on that day to the soldiers in the boat. The Barphukan reprimanded the astrologers for having boarded a war-sloop, saying,—“I do not know who allowed these astrologers to get into war-boats. If they die we become helpless, as their predictions are our effective inspiration.” To this Samudra replied,—“In the war of the Mahabharata men died in all parts of the theatre of contest, and traces could not be obtained of the venues of death.”<sup>63</sup>

During the course of the same engagement an Ahom captain named Koa Mriddha was captured by the Moguls along with his boat. The triumphant Mogul soldiers proposed to have a brief diversion and asked Koa Mriddha to amuse them by dancing. Koa Mriddha agreed to this proposal, and after having flung a hint to his oarsmen with his eyes he asked his captors to clap their hands musically to the rhythm of his dance. The captive



danced on merrily, and the Moguls offered the necessary music, supplemented by the timely beatings of the oars. The dance and the music having attained the climax Koa Mriddha's boatmen deftly steered the vessel towards the Assamese side of the bank, and got out of the reach of the enemy. The captors shouted: "The *koa* (crow) is flown." When Ram Singha heard this he simply exclaimed: "How clever is that Assamese Sardar!"<sup>64</sup>

During September 1669 the Ahoms continued their guerilla attacks with greater vigour than before. They would come out of their forts at midnight and fall upon the enemy. They continuously harassed the Moguls and inflicted heavy casualties on them. Ram Singha despatched a letter to the Barphukan asking him to put a stop to these "Thieves' affairs": he wrote,—“I have now obtained evidence of the courage and valour of my brother-Nawab. Being unable to match with us in strength he is adopting tricks employed only by thieves, just as jackals contrive the death of wild elephants. No honour accrues in fighting with such dotards; and it is not shameful if one shows his back against thieves and robbers. So I am not going to fight any longer.” So from October 1669 to March 1670 Ram Singh withdrew himself from the fight.<sup>65</sup>

To Ram Singha's accusation that the Ahoms had vitiated the dignity of warfare by instituting attacks at night the Barphukan and his commanders sent the following reply through Rani Kataki and Kalia Kataki: "We wanted to test whether Ram Singha possesses stamina to fight on land. It must be remembered that

64. Ms. Assam Buranji No. 12.

65. Ms. Assam Buranji No. 12.

lions alone fight at night, while others fight during day-time whether in land or in water." Ram Singha stuck fast to his opinion that nocturnal engagements are not permissible. To this the two Assamese envoys who were both Brahmans replied: "The Ahoms cannot but fight at night as they have in their army a force of one hundred thousand Rakshasas or demons who are all man-eaters and night-rovers." Ram Singha would not believe it, but the two messengers assured him again and again that nothing but truth would escape from the lips of Brahmans. To this Ram Singha replied: "I now understand why the Assamese army is so very powerful at night. They have Rakshasas and cannibals in their camp! Anyhow I must be furnished with proofs; then only I shall believe the words of the Brahmans." The two envoys reported the whole conversation to the Barphukan who praised them for their consternating bluffs, and promised to contrive evidence of the presence of Rakshasas in the Assamese camp. The Ahom soldiers were each dressed in black garments, and equipped with a human leg in one hand and burnt fishes on the other. During the course of the night the soldiers went about to and fro raising the legs towards the Mogul camp. Ram Singha having witnessed the so-called Rakshasa army believed in the representation of the Brahmans.<sup>66</sup>

Ram Singha enquired of the two Assamese envoys Bhakatdah and Dhuli as to the strength of the Ahom army, saying: "Please explain why a Kshattriya like myself has not been able to attain any success. What are the peculiar features of Ahom strategy and wherein

lies their invincibility ? Who are their commanders and what are their names ?" To this the messengers replied : " Oh, Maharaja, listen to what we say. The Premier Rup-Swarga [Rukma] Buragohain has taken the field in person along with the Barphukan whose name is Lachit.<sup>67</sup> The other principal commanders are Champa Paniphukan son of the Phul Barua, Laluki Namdayangia Phukan, Pelan Charingia Phukan, Deka Phukan, Gohain-phukan, Barpatra Gohain, Bargohain, Sadiya-khowa Rup Sandikai, and Miri Sandikai. The junior commanders are Sen Gohain, Moran Gohain, Lechai son of Rangachila, Luthuri Dayangia Rajkhowa, Nam-Dayangia Rajkhowa, Pani-Dihingia Rajkhowa, Tarua-Dihingia Rajkhowa, Majiu-Abhaypuria Rajkhowa, Saru-Abhaypuria Rajkhowa, Namdangia Rajkhowa, Gajpuria Rajkhowa, Dikhowmukhia Rajkhowa, Tar-Salaguria Rajkhowa, Neog Lathum, and Chaodang Barua ; these are Nawabs of intermediate ranks. Besides there are commanders of all grades and ranks. Not to speak of yourself, even the Padshah will not be able to vanquish them in war." Ram Singha then enquired as to why these commanders were absent in the previous wars. To this the envoys replied : " These commanders ordinarily live at Namrup at a distance of a month's journey from the capital, and they did not get any information whatsoever of the outbreak of hostilities. They have heard about it this time, and therefore they have come."<sup>68</sup>

Ram Singha would not be satisfied with this one-sided account of the Assamese commanders. He asked his

<sup>67</sup>. The different names by which the Premier Atan Buragohain were known were,—Rukma Buragohain, Bahgaria Buragohain, and Gidamukali Buragohain.

<sup>68</sup>. Ms. Assam Buranji No. 12.

own envoy Panditrai,—“Well, Panditrai, during your visit to the Barphukan's camp you must have formed some impression of the Ahom ministers and commanders. Please tell me what you have seen and what you think of them.” To this Panditrai replied,—“The Barpatra Gohain, the Bargohain and the Barphukan have all impressed me as wonderfully capable commanders presenting a rare combination of beauty, accomplishment, valour and wisdom. As to the Buragohain he is young in years, fair and handsome in features, sober and deep in intelligence, dexterous in all matters, and he rivals all others in the soundness of his counsel.” Ram Singha commented,—“It is really wonderful that a man can be so intelligent at this tender age.” Panditrai added,—“The Buragohain is also an arch-diplomat.” Ram Singha concluded,—“Who will be able to cope with such a minister when he comes to years? Pride should be the heritage of that land where such a counsellor has taken his birth.”<sup>69</sup>

The Assamese messengers also told Ram Singha that the commanders were accompanied by one Churamani Daivajna whose astrological calculations were so accurate and infallible that when he advised the army to start on an expedition victory was writ large on their forehead, adding that in the face of these invincibles Ram Singha's defeat was a foregone conclusion. Bhakatdah further informed Ram Singha that Churamani was paid one thousand rupees per month; and the Rajput Raja promised to pay Churamani rupees four thousand per month, and ten thousand rupees as reward to Bhakatdah if he could make over the astrologer

to the Rajput Raja. Bhakatdah broached the proposal to Churamani who said: "At times I feel tempted to go and see the fun. I have been responsible for the slaughter of so many Mogul soldiers that I will not be surprised if they capture me alive, and I may also exasperate the Barphukan for carrying on liaison with the enemy." Churamani reported the matter to the Barphukan who vehemently discountenanced such devices to raise money. Bhakatdah then tried to secretly entice Churamani to the presence of Ram Singha. Having heard this the Barphukan proposed to punish Bhakatdah by throwing him into water, but Bhakatdah deserted his camp and fled.<sup>70</sup>

The Premier Atan *alias* Rukma Buragohain Dangaria who commanded the northern division of the Ahom army from his base at Lathia fort, initiated a campaign of harassing the Moguls by employing Lai, Lechai, Chili, Mabi, Mari, Achor, Timai, Baduli, and other spies who entered into the enemy's camps at night and removed therefrom their treasures and money. The Mogul commanders used to sleep in the evening after their meals and the customary dose of *bhang* and *dhutura*.<sup>71</sup> Lying on their bed they used to puff at the long pipes attached to their hookahs. When they fell asleep the Khitmatgars or attendants removed the pipes from their mouths, lay them round the hookahs and themselves repaired to sleep

70. Ms. Assam Buranji No. 12.

71. *Bhang* has been described by Manucci as a beverage made of "the leaves of dried hemp ground down, which intoxicates as soon as taken. Aurangzeb also wanted to suppress this disorder. . . . But, seeing that the ministers themselves drank and loved to get drunk, the rigour of prohibition was lightened by degrees," *Storia do Mogor*, tr. Irvine, II, p. 7. *Dhutura*, thornapple or stramonium, is used as a substitute for hemp, and produces stronger results.

in a separate place. The cessation of the sound of the hookahs was a signal to the eavesdropping spies to enter into the tents, and remove the bags of money. They also purloined the silver hookahs used by the Nawabs. While leading the horses with the stolen bags the Assamese spies were occasionally sighted by the enemy, but they rode posthaste to their camps eluding the pursuit of the Moguls.<sup>72</sup>

The Assamese commanders gradually realised that their guerilla attacks and spoliations could not achieve any definite result beyond harassing the enemy. They avoided land-fights as far as possible, and were specially shy before cavalry charges. They believed that one fully armed horse soldier of the Moguls could easily disperse and rout an Assamese force of one hundred men. They discussed their position in a war-council and unanimously decided that their mainstay was naval fighting, and that measures should be adopted to allure the Moguls to an engagement on the waters of the Brahmaputra and that land-fights should be specially guarded against. They greatly dreaded the prospect of land-fights but they kept their fears strictly to themselves.

### AHOM DISASTER AT ALABOI

One Ghorakowanr, the predecessor of Lachit in the Barphukanship of Lower Assam, was entrusted with the duty of conveying messages between the king at Gargaon and his commanders at Gauhati. Pelan Phukan, the Ahom commander of the Rangmahal fort, secretly informed Ghorakowanr that the Barphukan was

72. Ms. Assam Buranji, No. 12.

unnecessarily postponing a decisive encounter though the rains were favourable for offensive operations. Ghorakowanr reported the same to King Chakradhwaj Singha who readily believed in the possibility of slackness on the part of the Gauhati commanders.

The Ahom king's loss of confidence in his Gauhati officers was occasioned by a diplomatic *ruse* on the part of Ram Singha. The Rajput general having failed to obtain the evacuation of Gauhati by negotiation and war attempted to create dissension among the Ahom commanders and thus render concerted action on their part an impossibility. The Raja tied a letter to an arrow and shot it to the camp of Miri Sandikai Phukan. The message was addressed to the Barphukan and ran as follows : "Oh Barphukan, yesterday you accepted from us a reward of one lakh of rupees and you signed a written agreement to desist from fighting against us. But it appears you have not yet abandoned your war-array. May I know the reason ?" Miri Sandikai Phukan sent up the letter to the Ahom king, who grown impatient to receive news of the expulsion of the enemy, believed in this story as well. The Barphukan was under a cloud of suspicion for some time, which was, however, dispelled through the intervention of Atan Buragohain Rajmantri Dangaria, who pointed out the hostile hand in the affair and vouchsafed for the unquestionable loyalty of the Barphukan.<sup>73</sup>

In the meantime Ram Singha sent a letter to the Barphukan through one Sonbar Nadial inviting the king of Assam to fight a duel in the presence of the two hostile

73. Barua, Kesabkanta, *Baniya-kakatir Bangsawali-sar*, pp. 50-52.

armies. Though the Rajput Raja described himself in this letter as the son of Mirza Raja Jai Singha and a descendant of Raja Mandhata, the Ahom king dismissed the insolent challenge by simply saying : "Ram Singha is a mere servant and he has no umbrella over his head. So I do not like to fight a duel with such a man."<sup>74</sup>

King Chakradhwaj Singha could not hold his patience any longer. He resolved to see the end of the campaign and in the event of failure, he proposed to punish the commanders for their dilatory methods. He accordingly sent a consignment of garments worn by slave girls together with a handful of axes asking Lachit Barphukan to immediately attack the Moguls, otherwise the general and his lieutenants would have to wear the garments despatched, and their hearts would be ripped open with the axes. The Moguls had then concentrated their army near Alaboi Hill in the vicinity of Dalibari. There was a vast plain in front of the Mogul camp, and the level lands touched the Brahmaputra on one side and the Sesa river on the other. Lachit Phukan knew very well that his army, naturally shy of horses, would not meet with success in an encounter with the Rajputs in an open field. On receiving the king's command Lachit Phukan simply said : "The Rajputs have concentrated their forces at Alaboi. It will be difficult for us to escape unscathed if we fling a stone into a revengeful nest of immature hornets. At the same time I cannot but obey the command of His Majesty."<sup>75</sup>

In the meantime Ram Singha from his base at Alaboi despatched an insulting challenge to the Ahoms inviting

74. Barua, Golap Chandra, *Ahom Buranji*, pp. 208-209.

75. Bhuyan, S.K., *Assam Buranji*, S.M. p. 116; Ms. Assam Buranji No. 5, No. 14.



them to an open encounter. He arranged to send a force under the command of one Mir Nawab. The Barphukan accepted the challenge and despatched an army of forty thousand men under the command of Charingia Pelan Phukan, Dikhowmukhia Rajkhowa, Nam-Dayangia Rajkhowa, and Opar-Dayangia Rajkhowa. He sent a messenger to persuade Ram Singha to believe that the Assamese force only numbered twenty thousand strong; and the Rajput general to obtain the credit of a victory with a numerically inferior army placed under the command of Mir Nawab only ten thousand soldiers. Ram Singha further posted a female warrior named Madanavati at the vanguard of the detachment, saying,—“If she is defeated we shall not be subjected to any disgrace; and if victory be on the side of the enemy they will be credited with no honour and prestige.” Madanavati dressed herself in the attire and armour of a male warrior and marched at the head of the Mogul army. The Ahoms now adopted a device which had been found effective in their wars with Cooch Behar one hundred years ago. They dressed their archers and musketeers in the robes of Brahmans and placed them in front of the fighting lines. Ram Singha sitting on the howdah of his elephant witnessed the “Brahman” vanguard, enjoyed a heartily laughter and admired the originality of his adversaries.

Then there ensued a terrible contest on the plains to the south of the Alaboi Hill. Madanavati rushed into the enemy's lines with the speed of lightning and cut off with her own hands a large number of Assamese soldiers. On account of the swiftness of her movements she proved invulnerable to the shots discharged by the Ahoms from their bows and guns. The first three lines of the Assamese army were dispersed with heavy casualties.

The Barphukan then ordered his men to dig trenches and fight from there. When the Rajputs under Madanavati had routed the fourth Assamese line they were confronted by the concealed fighters in the trenches. The Rajputs sought a diversion and attempted to cross the Brahmaputra, but here also they were confronted by a detachment of Assamese soldiers. In the encounter that followed Madanavati was shot dead by a hostile bullet on the bank of the Brahmaputra.

Mir Nawab, the Mogul commander, then personally led the attack against the Assamese army. Churamani Daivajna predicted to Lachit Barphukan that Mir Nawab was destined to fall in the engagement. The Barphukan and his principal lieutenants were watching the battle from a distance being protected by an enclosure of screen-plates. They questioned the astrologer Churamani Daivajna as to the issue of the encounter, as to who would be wounded, who would be killed, and who would be able to inflict the heaviest blow. As the warriors advanced to the battle-front Churamani went on predicting: "This is a valorous fighter, he will come back after vanquishing the enemy. The other man will be half-killed; and the third will be completely smashed." The predictions of the astrologer were fulfilled to the letter; and Lachit Phukan shouted out: "Thanks to thee, Churamani Daivajna, you have brought within your control the entire science of warfare."

The detachment under Mir Nawab was routed by the Ahoms, and Luthuri Rajkhowa captured Mir Nawab alive and presented him before the Barphukan. This Luthuri had previously been a captive at Delhi, and had been released through the intercession of Mir Nawab. The Mogul commander now requested Luthuri to do him

a good turn by releasing him from captivity. To this Luthuri replied: "What was done by you cannot be repeated by me. If I release you even my sons and daughters will not be spared from extermination. Hence desist from making such a request to me." Mir Nawab was then brought to the Ahom fort and kept under watch and guard.<sup>76</sup>

But this temporary success of the Assamese was soon followed by a terrible disaster, and the battle of Alaboi was ever afterwards remembered with consternation and regret. Ram Singha now realised fully that the Assamese had supplemented their war-measures by diplomacy and misrepresentation. He said: "I was informed at the outset that the Assamese would despatch to the battle only twenty thousand soldiers, and I sent only ten thousand to avoid outnumbering the enemy which amounts to a contravention of the ethics of war. My other soldiers were ready for action, and I could despatch any number of them as reinforcement. It was a sin to witness encounters between two unequal forces." He then issued out of his camp and ordered his veterans to engage the Assamese forces as the latter were returning to their forts with spoils and captives. The Rajput soldiers were equipped this time with 'Yantras' or machines, and long shields under whose shelter they

76. Ms. Assam Buranji No. 12. Luthuri Rajkhowa had been taken to Delhi by Mir Jumla along with other Assamese captives. During Dilir Khan's storming of Simalugarh fort, an Assamese prisoner, in the service of the Moguls as an *ahadi*, undertook to lead Dilir Khan to a place from where he could make an attack easily. "Dilir Khan proceeded at night according to the guidance of this rascal . . . . A hot engagement took place, a great many of the armies of Islam were wounded, and a number lost their lives,"—*Maasir-ul-Umara*, tr. Beveridge and Bains Prashad, I, p. 500.

could fight uninjured. They in a body fell upon the Assamese army before the latter could enter their forts. The Assamese soldiers were hardly prepared for this eventuality, and they were not accustomed to fight with Rajput horsemen equipped with these new contrivances. The Ahoms could not stand the onset of the enemy. The Rajputs pressed them so close that few Ahom soldiers could raise the triggers of their guns or fix the arrows to their bows. Ten thousand soldiers of the Barphukan lay lifeless in the Alaboi plain. After having inflicted this massacre the Rajputs returned to their camps at the close of the day.

Ram Singha's exaltation knew no bounds. "Look at the rashness of the Assamese", said the Rajput general, "they venture to fight on the plains with Amber horsemen!" Ram Singha shot a message on an arrow to Lachit Barphukan asking the latter to refrain from such tomfooleries in future. The Ahom general shot a counter-message,—“Numerous chieftains of the neighbouring territories have joined our ranks. Some of them sought a diversion without consulting us. A detachment has been lost : we have many more still fully prepared for action.”<sup>77</sup>

The massacre at Alaboi had terribly upset Lachit Barphukan. He sat depressed in his camp and said,—“Each of our soldiers is a pillar of strength ; and I have lost to-day ten thousand such stalwarts.” The Premier Atan Buragohain gave him counsel saying,—“Well, general, such a reverse should never shake your confidence in our ultimate victory. Eventualities of this character are normal in a protracted warfare. When

77. Bhuyan, S.K., *Assam Buranji*, S.M., pp. 116-117.

you agitate the waters of a pond for catching large fishes the fish-catchers will be pricked by the thorny scales of the smaller fries. You should judge your success by the number of large catches.”<sup>78</sup> The Alaboi massacre pointed to the baneful effect of the supersession of the man on the spot by superior intervention. It must, however, be admitted that though the Alaboi massacre meant a serious loss to the Ahoms it did not confer upon the enemy any decisive advantage. It was a mere isolated triumph won against a fraction of the Ahom army.

### RAM SINGHA PRESSES HIS DEMANDS

Elated by this victory Ram Singha vigorously repeated his demands for the evacuation of Gauhati promising to pay three lakhs of rupees to cover the expenses of the fortifications erected by the Ahoms. Ram Singha had realised that though a state of hostilities had continued for several months the Ahoms had not surrendered an inch of their ground, nor had they desisted from utilising every opportunity for resistance, though their professions of friendship were profuse and never-ending. Ram Singha was thus in a curious tangle, not knowing whether to attack or to retreat.

He admired the tactfulness of Lachit Barphukan and enquired of the Assamese envoy Kaupatia Madhabcharan about the antecedents of his redoubtable antagonist,—“Well, Madhabcharan, may I ask where was this valiant general when Mir Jumla overran your country?” Madhabcharan’s reply was worthy of his master,—“In the eastern region there is a kingdom called

78. Ms. Assam Buranji No. 5, No. 14.

Nara, which was bound by a treaty to pay annually to the Ahom monarch a stipulated tribute of horses, cloths, elephants and money. The king of Nara disregarded the terms of the treaty, and Lachit Phukan was despatched by the Ahom monarch to extort the tribute from the refractory lord of Nara. The Ahom general devastated the country of Nara, and exacted from its unwilling lord the tribute. On hearing of the arrival of Mir Jumla in Assam, the Assamese commander pursued the Nawab, but on reaching Kaliabar he learnt that the Mogul general had been gathered to his forefathers." Madhabcharan who was a born propagandist instilled further awe and terror into the hearts of his auditors when he continued,—“Numerous chieftains of the mountainous regions have become our willing allies in the campaign. They are accompanied by a total strength of three lakhs of soldiers. They are not amenable to any considerations of right and wrong. Their participation in the war has been directly sanctioned by His Majesty, and they rush furiously against the enemy without waiting for the orders of the general. They are quick and sudden in their attacks, and their movements and actions cannot be presaged.”<sup>79</sup>

Ram Singha repeated through Madhabcharan his demands for the evacuation of Gauhati and reversion to the *status quo ante* of the year 1639. The Barphukan sent him up to the Premier at his camp at Lathia Hill. Madhabcharan was sent again to Ram Singha with necessary instructions. On being asked about the decision of the Ahoms Madhabcharan communicated to Ram

79. Bhuyan, S.K., *Assam Buranji, S.M.*, pp. 117-118; Ms. Assam Buranji No. 7.

Singha the following reply of the Barphukan." "I am only a servant of His Majesty. Any terms into which I may enter with the Rajput Raja may not receive the approbation of our sovereign. Therefore, the Raja should desire for a treaty which will be ratified by all the parties concerned, and its objects enhanced by continued observance. If such a treaty can be concluded the Raja will be praised in all quarters. The Raja has been despatched by the Emperor of Delhi for his intelligence and skill in warfare. If he goes from here without the credit of a decisive victory over our arms the expectations made of him will no longer be justified." Ram Singha pretended to approve of the Barphukan's way of thinking.

Having failed to obtain any concession from the Ahoms Ram Singha attempted to corrupt their commanders by gifts and presents. He said to Madhabcharan in confidence: "I am sending some money with you for the Phukans and the Rajkhowas. They should exercise their influence in procuring the evacuation of Gauhati. I am prepared to do whatever I am asked to do." The Assamese envoy undertook the task and received the money. A necklace studded with gems was also sent as a present to the Barphukan, with the request that it should be worn by the Barphukan when he appeared on the battle-field. Ram Singha despatched with Madhabcharan his own envoy Panditrai who was reputed to be a clever diplomat.<sup>80</sup> Panditrai with all the

80. Bhuyan, S.K., *Assam Buranjī*, S.M., p. 119; *Kamrupar* ... ter written by Shaista Khan in April 1664, ... was said,—"I have sent this time Panditrai ... man of ours. You should send him back soon. You are fortunate that such a devout Brahman and a Pandit is visiting your place out of his goodwill towards you.

resources at his command persuaded the Barphukan to surrender Gauhati. The Barphukan remained firm in the position he had previously maintained. He replied : "Our sovereign the Swarga-Maharaja is the lord of the East, and the Padshah is the lord of the West. If they decide then we can surrender our territory, and you can also surrender Bengal. If we enter into any terms ourselves, our respective masters may refuse to ratify them." Madhabcharan was sent again to the Mogul camp in the company of Panditrai.<sup>81</sup>

Ram Singha now became desperately anxious to bring things to a head. He was informed by Panditrai that there was only one possible venue for attack, on account of the existence of a slight opening in the rampart in the sandbanks between the Barphukan's headquarters at Itakhuli and the foot of the Kamakhya Hill. The sandbank is known as Andharubali, and the Gauhati Strand Road runs parallel to it at present. Amrajuri-ghat is the landing station for boats at the foot of the Kamakhya Hill. There was a rampart on the bank at Andharubali even upto the end of the eighteenth century, but no trace of it can be found at present, this portion of the river bank being the most vulnerable from the point of view of erosion. The famous Kamakhya temple, believed to be the earliest home of Tantric worship in Eastern India,

You should therefore make him satisfied, for which you will be  
 "and earn both piety and religious merit,"—  
 Letter No. 4. Panditrai was most probably  
 envoy in the services of both Shaista Khan  
 and Ram Singha. The title "Pandit Rao" was conferred by  
 Shivaji on his confidential minister and chief justice Raghunath  
 Bhat Pant Ballal who headed the Mahratta peace mission to Jai  
 Singha, Sen's *Chhatrapati*, pp. 51, 210; Sarkar's *Shivaji*, p. 130;  
 and *Maratha People* by Kincaid and Parasnis, p. 211.

81. Bhuyan, S.K., *Assam Buranji*, S.M., p. 118.



is situated at the top of the hill of that name, at a distance of two miles to the west of Gauhati. Opposite to Kamakhya on the North Bank is the Aswakranta temple. So a regular triangle can be constituted on the waters connecting Amrajuri-ghat and Itakhuli on the south bank, and Aswakranta on the north. Ram Singha proposed to enter Gauhati by the breach in the rampart at Andharubali with a detachment of his cavalry, by carrying his men and horses in boats across the river.

### DEATH OF KING CHAKRADHWAJ SINGHA

Just when the war was taking a more critical turn Chakradhwaj Singha, king of Assam, died in April 1670. His overwhelming sense of self-respect and patriotism was mainly responsible in restoring to his country its lost prestige and glory. His personality instilled courage and determination into the hearts of his commanders and men. When the best brains of the country were absent at Gauhati the king had to conduct the administration with inferior materials. The maintenance of an efficient civil administration was necessary to guarantee the regular reinforcements of men and provisions to a distant army. Swargadeo Chakradhwaj Singha gave the desired momentum, and it worked its way to ultimate victory.

### UDAYADITYA SUCCEEDS CHAKRADHWAJ SINGHA

Chakradhwaj Singha was succeeded by his brother Udayaditya Singha. The new monarch was quite capable of normally conducting the war, but he had not the force of personality possessed by his predecessor on the

throne. Murmurings were also audible in the Assamese camp for long continuance of hostilities. Ram Singha pressed his demands much more insistently than before. The Assamese commanders were given to believe that Ram Singha would not leave the frontier until he could get his demands accepted. Emperor Aurangzeb's farewell injunction delivered to Ram Singha was freely circulated in the Assamese camp. The Emperor was reported to have said to Ram Singha: "If you can accomplish your mission you will be made an Omrao, and given valuable presents. If you fail your head will be taken off. I shall, besides, slay your children and dependants in a place far away from your territory."<sup>82</sup> The Assamese commanders began to encourage the peace proposals, and the relations became more cordial.

Ram Singha deputed this time three envoys, Mira, Ramhari Karji and Panditrai, with a letter repeating his demands. The Barphukan replied: "The cordial relations established by Allah Yar Khan and my father have not yet lost the lustre of their renown. If the Raja is keen on peace he should send back Panditrai and Mira." He also sent some presents to Ram Singha. The Raja promised to send back Panditrai and Mira; and the Assamese envoys Nim and Ramcharan communicated this proposal to the Barphukan. The Assamese envoys were received this time with great pomp and ceremony. Sandal-paste was offered to them in a golden cup, and betel-nuts in a silver tray. The Barphukan made arrangements to accord similar reception to Panditrai. King Udayaditya Singha being apprised of this fact arranged silver and gold cups, trays and dishes, as well

as embroidered cloths and canopies for use at the time of receiving Panditrai.

But Ram Singha had realised fully that all this show of earnestness for peace was meant to postpone the vital issue. He cried out to Nim and Ramcharan: "There is no end of sending embassies; and nothing has been achieved. I request again that the Barphukan should surrender Gauhati to me, and release Syed Sana, and the son of Syed Firoz. If I demand more than this, this sword in my hand which is like Parameswari or the Supreme Goddess will cause my annihilation; and this pearl-chain on my neck—a veritable Lakshmi—will desert me for good, and my fourteen generations will go to hell. If my words are not believed let us proceed to the temple of Madhab on the bank of the Lauhitya where I am prepared to solemnly affirm my oaths. If my brother the Barphukan agrees to this proposal he shall be given whatever he shall desire." Ram Singha sent this message through Nim and Ramcharan; but no Mogul envoy did accompany them, nor any epistle from the Rajput Raja. Lachit Phukan communicated Ram Singha's proposal to the king at Gargaon, but His Majesty did not approve of this action of the Barphukan, as the proposals were not duly submitted by the emissaries of the Rajput Raja. The king refused to despatch the articles he had arranged to send to the Barphukan for use on the occasion of the reception of Panditrai.<sup>83</sup>

The Assamese commanders including the Barphukan are said to have contemplated to evacuate Gauhati, though the exact reason for this decision is not known. The Prime Minister dissented from this proposal, and he

83. Ms. Assam Buranji No. 5, No. 14, No. 15.

submitted: "If you want to give up Gauhati at this stage, what was the good of fighting so long causing such loss to our men and provisions? Ram Singha has pressed his demands with oaths and promises praying for the restoration of the old limits. Even if we agree it is not known whether the Mogul Emperor will accept Ram Singha's proposal which is like a highway made of ashes. There is also no guarantee whether Ram Singha's successor in the Assam command will respect the stipulations of his predecessor. What shall we do then? Besides, where shall we go if we abandon Gauhati? We shall have to abandon Gargaon as well and take shelter in Namrup." The suggestion of the Buragohain was confirmed by the king; and the Ahom commanders, in accordance with the orders of His Majesty, remained ready for action.<sup>84</sup>

In the meantime, Emperor Aurangzeb sent a message through Raship Khan, nephew of the 'cruising admiral' Manowar Khan,—“I have sent Ram Singha to fight with Assam, and not to make friends with the people there.” To this Ram Singha replied: “I have not refrained from fighting; but it has proved useless. As there are no fields, fighting by spears, shields and guns is an impossible affair. The Assamese have erected an impenetrable wall of defence on both the banks. There is the possibility of one naval fight only.”<sup>85</sup>

Ram Singha received another disheartening news from Delhi. Taking advantage of Ram Singha's absence in Assam, Emperor Aurangzeb in a fit of anger asked his son Krishna Singha to entertain him by playing with

84. Ms. Assam Buranji No. 14.

85. Bhuyan, S.K., *Assam Buranji*, S.M., p. 121.

tigers. Krishna Singha, armed with his shield and sword, rushed into the arena, fought with the brutes for some time and finally succeeded in slaying them. To this report, Ram Singha's widowed mother and his wife added a note of warning: "The Emperor contrived the death of Krishna Singha by making him wrestle with tigers. Such a friend is the Emperor! We have received enough tokens of gratitude for the conquests your father and yourself have made on behalf of the Emperor. Never dream that we shall gain more by your invasion of the eastern land of Assam. We are told that there is universal religious music and recital in Assam, and that cows, Brahmans and Vaisnavas are living there in peace and happiness. You are aware of the consequences of bringing them under foreign domination. Remember also that after having invaded Assam Mir Jumla could not thrive long. So take heed, and do as you think proper." It was also reported that Emperor Aurangzeb had proposed to convert Ram Singha's son into Islam.<sup>86</sup>

### ASSAMESE VICTORY AT SARAIGHAT

Ram Singha had already realised that peace negotiations had proved futile and ineffective. He now resolved to decide the issue by resuming offensive operations. The possibility of entering Gauhati by the breach at Andharubali and the illness of the Barphukan had encouraged Ram Singha to swift action. Five Mogul captains including two Firinghees fired their guns and shot their arrows from boats. The Assamese fleet then

86. Bhuyan, S.K., *Kamrupar Buranji*, p. 87; *Assam Buranji*, S.M., p. 121; Goswami, H.C., *Purani Assam Buranji*, p. 147; Ms. Assam Buranji No. 7.

retreated to Amrajuri-ghat. The Moguls on horseback steered their boats towards Andharubali. The breach being repaired in the meantime the Moguls crossed over to Juria on the north bank. The Assamese pursuing the Mogul fleet moored their boats at Aswakranta.

The Barphukan was very ill, and being deprived of his personal command the Ahoms did not entertain much hope of success. Some of them had already loaded their boats with a view to retreat. The commander at Aswakranta, a Hazarika of the Miri Sandikai family, asked the Barphukan to come to his rescue as his men were deserting their ranks. Lachit Barphukan sent the following reply to the Aswakranta commander." "Tell your men I am going to die on this spot, and I never think of abandoning my charge. I have bought a slice of earth on the top of Chila Hill which will provide sufficient accommodation for my remains.<sup>87</sup> If I survive I shall go after all the people have left this place." A commander named Nara Hazarika rushed from Sinduri-ghopa fort to Aswakranta, and knelt down before the retreating soldiers shouting: "O my countrymen, do please flee if you want to pour poison on this platter of gold!" The Barphukan instantly placed a force of 2,000 men at the disposal of Nara Hazarika.

The craze for flight was so universal that the boats belonging to the Prime Minister and the Barphukan, were loaded and became ready for departure. In fact the Barphukan's boats were rowed a few leagues up the

87. Chila Hill, in North Gauhati, was a strongly fortified place. The Ahoms used to bury their dead though during the 18th century, and under the influence of Hinduism, the custom of cremating the remains was gradually introduced, *vide* S. K. Bhuyan's *Deodhai Assam Buranji*, pp. xvi-xviii, 142-149.

river to Latasil. The Barphukan was watching the whole situation from his sick-bed at his archery store. He witnessed the advance of the Mogul fleet from Juria towards Aswakranta. A sanguine encounter was imminent in which the retreating Ahom force was sure to be annihilated.

The Barphukan was too weak to move. He ordered his men to remove him with his bed to the gate-house from where he could obtain a clear view of the gathering boats. Four Bhuyan-powalis then caught the four supports of the bed and removed the general to the gate-house.

Not a moment was to be lost. The Barphukan proposed to rush upon the enemy, but the astrologer Achyutananda Doloi dissuaded the general from attack as the time was not auspicious for such an action. This was the most critical moment in the life of Lachit Barphukan. Here was his army on the verge of extermination, and his country's independence lost for ever; and here is a warning from the scriptures that an engagement commenced at that moment was bound to be unsuccessful. He had himself promulgated an order that no one should fire a gun or shoot an arrow before hearing the signal from the general's artillery. The astrologers, Brahmanical or Ahom, had very high credit at court. Expert Daivajnas were attached to the establishments of all the leading commanders and administrators; and successive sovereigns had passed orders that the astrologers must be consulted before initiating a campaign or commencing an attack.<sup>88</sup> There

88. Bhuyan, S.K., *Deodhai Assam Buranji*, pp. xviii-xx, and text pp. 151-152. Astrological calculations regarding Assam's victory over the Moguls being found true, King Pratap Singha,

were elaborate treatises on the political use of astrology. Lachit Barphukan, as a high official of the land conversant with its laws and traditions, could not supersede the findings of the astrologers. Lachit Barphukan undergoing extreme physical agony and mental torture cried out: "O, astrologer, I shall take off your head without waiting for His Majesty's orders." Achyutananda had firm faith in his calculations, and he silently replied: "Please do so." It must be admitted to the dignity of Lachit Barphukan that he never for a moment suspected of a possible collusion of the astrologer with the enemy.

Lachit Barphukan bowed his head before the warning of the astrologer. He had been receiving intelligence of the battle every minute. He could not hold his patience any longer, and he shouted out: "The Moguls are almost reaching Amrajuri. O astrologer, you have paved the way for your annihilation, brought about my disgrace, and destroyed my bread!" After a few seconds the Doloi announced: "I have found in my *Swarodoi* treatise that this is an auspicious moment for attack. It was at this time that Ramchandra attacked Ravana."

The Barphukan then came down the steps of the gatehouse being supported by one Nadai of Kharangi, and boarded his boat, accompanied by six other war-vessels.<sup>89</sup> Seeing the retreating of the Ahom soldiers the oarsmen

1603-1641, ordered,—“I shall not spare the man who will act in contravention of the orders of my astrologers and Deodhais”. Trained astrologers were attached to the establishments of the officers serving in Gauhati and Lower Assam.

89. Bardoloi, K.N., *Sandipika*, Part I, pp. 17-18, extract from an old Assamese chronicle, according to which Lachit Barphukan was carried to his boat on a bedstead (*khatola*) borne by the four Bhuyans, and he was placed on the boat in that condition.



rowed the Barphukan's boat up the river leaving the scene of contest. The Barphukan exclaimed from his barge: "His Majesty has given me the supreme command of the army here and placed at my disposal vast stores of provisions so that I may fight with the enemy. Should I now desert the fight and revert to the embraces of my wives and children? How dare these serfs of boatmen venture to row up the boats without my orders!" He then hammered four oarsmen of his with the blunt edge of the sword and threw them into water. He, however, allowed them to be rescued when their comrades entreated him for mercy.

The promptness with which the Barphukan dealt with the oarsmen produced consternation and terror in the hearts of his army. The rumour went out that the general having witnessed the flight of his soldiers had begun to kill men indiscriminately with his own hands, and to throw them into water. It spread like wild fire, rousing the soldiers to sudden and courageous action. The Barphukan shouted at the pitch of his voice: "Let the Moguls capture me alive, and let my people go home in peace!" Having fired volleys from his guns the general rushed with seven boats towards the enemy. The Assamese fleet on both banks of the river having seen the Barphukan approaching the fleet of the enemy, steered their barges towards those of the general. The Ahom soldiers discharged their guns and their arrows from the banks as well as from the boats. Raship Khan, now confident of entering Gauhati through the breach at Andharubali, was enjoying his hookah on his boat, with his back turned towards the Assamese. He was killed by a hostile bullet.

The Assamese war-ships rushed into the thick of the Mogul fleet. A terrible contest then ensued between the two armies. The whole Brahmaputra at the triangle between Kamakhya, Itakhuli and Aswakranta became littered with boats, and men struggling to escape drowning. The Ahoms erected an improviso bridge across the Brahmaputra by placing one boat after another over the whole breadth of the river. The Moguls could not stand the dash and fury of the Assamese onset. The Assamese were fighting for their life and liberty, and the Moguls for the mere luxury of a triumph and territorial expansion. There were heavy casualties on the side of the invaders. The few that survived were chased down to Pandu, some three miles from the scene of contest. The Barphukan intended to chase them further still, but he was dissuaded by Achyutananda Doloi. The combat came to an end, and it was a decisive victory for the Assamese.<sup>90</sup>

Ram Singha, at the end of the contest, praised the valour and skill of his redoubtable adversaries,—“Every Assamese soldier is expert in rowing boats, in shooting arrows, in digging trenches, and in wielding guns and cannon. I have not seen such specimens of versatility in any other part of India,”<sup>91</sup> adding,—“One who comes to fight against Assam should be thrashed on the cheek by scavengers with their broomsticks.”<sup>92</sup>

This battle is known in history as the battle of Sarai-ghat, the name loosely applied in those days, and even

90. Bhuyan, S.K., *Assam Buranji*, S.M., pp. 121-124; H. C. Goswami's *Purani Assam Buranji*, pp. 147-150, and his *Sarai-ghatar Yuddha* in *Usha*, vol. I, pp. 213-216, 235-239.

91. Goswami, H.C., *Sarai-ghatar Yuddha*, *Usha*, I, p. 239.

92. Ms. Assam Buranji No. 15.

now by men of the older type, to Gauhati and its environs, though Sarai was strictly that small village Amingaon, the present railway station of the Bengal and Assam Railway, opposite Pandu. The officers stationed at Gauhati and the neighbourhood were always called Saraighatias; and the commanders who participated in the victory were ever afterwards known as Saraighat veterans. The Ahom victory at Saraighat dashed to pieces the hopes of Ram Singha to ingratiate himself once more into the favours of the Mogul Emperor. He had come with promises of vanquishing the Swarga-Maharaja of Assam; but he could not realise them though he adopted all the arts of warfare, friendly negotiations and belligerent measures. The panegyric which the author of the *Alamgir-namah* had showered on the Assamese monarchs received fresh confirmation: "The Rajas of Assam have never bowed the head of submission and obedience, nor have they paid tributes or revenue to the most powerful monarch, but they have curbed the ambition and checked the conquests of the most victorious princes of Hindustan. The solution of a war against them has baffled the penetration of heroes who have been styled Conquerors of the World."<sup>93</sup> To this may be added the opinion of a modern writer,—“The Assamese were to the Moslems what the Numidians and the Mauritanians were to the old Romans—*genus insuperbile bello*.”<sup>94</sup>

After the termination of the engagement the Prime Minister punished his retainers and servants for having

93. Vansittart, Henry, *Assam described in Alamgir-namah*, Asiatick Researches, vol. II, 1807, pp. 179-180.

94. *Calcutta Review*, vol. XLVI, 1867, *The Religious History of Assam*, p. 78. The writer's name is unknown.

prepared themselves to retreat by loading the boats. He said: "How dare you bring such disgrace upon my head? People will say that you loaded the boats having received my specific orders."

The Ahoms remained prepared for action thinking that Ram Singha's retreat might be a mere *ruse*. The Moguls during the entire night after the battle had been engaged in eating. The Ahom spies suspecting that Ram Singha might re-attack Gauhati on the morrow reported the matter to Lachit Barphukan. The general ordered the posting of relays of messengers at short intervals so that he might remain constantly informed of the movements of the enemy. He enjoined upon the Prime Minister and other commanders to remain ready for action. Achyutananda Doloi was consulted as to the real motive of the Moguls. The Doloi replied half-jestingly: "To-day we shall amuse ourselves at the sight of an interesting scene." The spies then informed the Barphukan: "There is no question of attack. The Moguls have folded up their tents and put them in the boats. They are preparing to sail down the river."

The Barphukan issued the following orders to his soldiers: "You should pursue the enemy from a distance but desist from harassing them by firing your guns or shooting your arrows. When they reach the old limits at Manaha you should throw up an outpost there and guard the frontier." The detachment deputed for this purpose represented to the Barphukan: "May we be permitted to fall upon the enemy? If we assail them we expect to get a considerable quantity of provisions and articles." Lachit Barphukan was not the man to enrich his country by the spoils of a retreating force. He replied in a dignified tone: "They are sailing down the river,

overpowered and disgraced, though they fought for one full year. I do not want to tarnish the fair name of my king and my ministers by plundering the fugitive soldiers.”<sup>95</sup>

Some of the Phukans and Rajkhowas also proposed to attack the retreating army. The Barphukan said : “ If we could have attacked them it would have been well and good. But remember the terrible consequences we had experienced by aggressively attacking Ram Singha at Alaboi. You have first of all to ascertain the strength of the fugitive army. Take heed of the consequences and do as you please.” The sage and calm spirit of the general prevailed over his commanders and they did not press further their proposal to attack the fugitives. It was on the 23rd of Chaitra, 1592 *saka*, or near about April 5, 1671 A.D. that Ram Singha commenced his retreat. Before he left Hazo he worshipped at the temple of Hayagriva-Madhava situated at that place, and said to the Brahmans officiating at the temple,—“ The Barnabab [Barphukan] is not a hero of an ordinary calibre ; the fortifications are complex and intricate ; and I could not therefore obtain any loophole for attack.”<sup>96</sup> The Ahoms despatched soldiers to the numerous garrisons situated between Gauhati and Manaha.

The news of victory was promptly communicated to King Udayaditya at Gargaon. He despatched valuable presents to the victorious commanders. The king conferred on Achyutananda Doloï the title of “ Samudra-khari”, gave him lands with servitors, and got him married to a girl of Kamrup. Nara Hazarika who had

95. Bhuyan, S.K., *Assam Buranji*, S.M., pp. 123-124.

96. Goswami, H.C., *Purani Assam Buranji* ; p. 150.

exhorted the soldiers at Aswakranta was given a purse of one thousand rupees.<sup>97</sup>

### DEATH OF LACHIT BARPHUDAN

But the joy of victory was marred by the death of the general Lachit Barphukan soon after the battle of Saraighat. He was in high fever when he led the attack against the Moguls. It was his indomitable spirit that goaded him to action though his frame was incapable of bearing such a tremendous burden. But for his timely intervention the failing enthusiasm of the Assamese soldiers would have purchased an ignoble defeat. Lachit Phukan, like Lord Nelson, died in the lap of victory; and the battle of Saraighat was Assam's Trafalgar.

### AHOM AFFAIRS UPTO THE YEAR 1826.

Lachit was succeeded in the Barphukanship by his elder brother Nimati, generally known as Metakatalia Laluk Sola Barphukan or Buraphukan. Ram Singha halted at Rangamati till February 1676 waiting for opportunities to re-invade Assam. The Ahoms remained ready at Gauhati to counteract the eventual renewal of hostilities with the Moguls. The best brains of the country, whether in statesmanship or war-craft, were concentrated

97. Bardoloi, K.N., *Sandipika*, Part I, p. 18, extract from an old chronicle, according to which Achyutananda was given the following rewards,—the title of *Samudra-khari*, gold bangles (gamkharu), a sacred thread of gold, one sedan (parhi-dola), and the daughter of Aladibari Gosain of Kamrup as wife, and 120 families of slaves as marriage portion. Vide also H. C. Goswami's *Saraighatar Yuddha* in Alochani, vol. VIII, pp. 374-376.

at Gauhati, and the affairs of the capital had to be manned by inferior talents and abilities. Gargaon became a theatre of contest between rival ministers and nobles who attempted to appropriate all political power for themselves and their supporters by a ruthless campaign of dethroning and killing the reigning sovereigns and mutilating rivals and possible claimants to succession.<sup>98</sup>

Six princes sat on the throne between the death of Chakradhwaj Singha in 1670 and the accession of Gadadhar Singha in 1681. Udayaditya was himself murdered through the machinations of Debera Barbarua who then inaugurated a veritable reign of terror killing rival princes or mutilating their limbs, doing away with his rivals and opponents, and dismissing and appointing officers at his own sweet will. The veterans of Saraighat marched up to the capital, captured and killed Debera, and placed on the throne a prince of their own selection. The Prime Minister Atan Buragohain Rajmantri Dangaria, by virtue of his foresight and disinterestedness, brought the situation under control, and he was acclaimed in all responsible quarters as the only saviour of his country. Twice the crown was offered to him and twice he refused.

The growing power of the Premier was, however, not tolerated by Laluk Sola Barphukan. He wanted to

98. For the events from after the battle of Saraighat to the accession of Gadadhar Singha in 1681, see S. K. Bhuyan's Preface to *Annals of the Delhi Badshahate* in *Islamic Culture* for January 1933. They are exhaustively dealt with in his *Atan Buragohain and His Times, 1662-1681*; the events upto the British occupation of Assam in 1826 are described in his *Anglo-Assamese Relations*. The three books are shortly to be published.

become king himself, and in order to obtain the support of the Emperor of Delhi, he negotiated with Sultan Azamtara, Governor of Bengal, for the evacuation of the fort of Gauhati.

The Barphukan utilised in this connection the services of Baduli who had been residing as a fugitive in Bengal, and of Ramani Gabharu, his own niece, who had been married in 1668 to Sultan Azamtara, and known as Rahmat Banu Begum. The Sultan deputed Nawab Mansur Khan to take delivery of Gauhati; and in March 1679 Laluk Sola Barphukan made over Gauhati to the Moguls in return for a promised reward of four lakhs of rupees and an assurance to support Laluk's candidature for the throne of Assam. Mansur Khan was appointed Fauzadar of the newly acquired territory. Laluk then marched up to Gargaon, killed the Premier who had come to oppose his advance and set up on the throne a stripling of fourteen years, murdered Princess Jaimati, wife of Gadapani, for refusing to furnish information about the movements of her fugitive husband, and himself wielded virtual sovereign power. But the hand of Nemesis was working secretly behind the scene; and Laluk was murdered in November 1680 by a disgruntled body of household retainers. The ministers were now roused to a sense of patriotism; they made a search for Kowanr Gadapani, the most valorous prince of the time, and placed him on the throne.

Gadapani was formally installed as sovereign in August 1681 under the name Gadadhar Singha. The first act of his reign was the despatch of an army against Mansur Khan which succeeded in recovering Gauhati in August 1682, after a decisive encounter at Itakhuli.



Manaha became once more the western boundary of Assam, and it remained as such till the occupation of the country by the British in the year 1824. Gadadhar Singha restored peace and order in the kingdom. His son King Rudra Singha, 1696-1714, subdued Cachar and Jayantia; and initiated measures for obtaining the friendship and support of the rulers of Hindusthan and specially of Bengal, in his enterprise to invade the territories of the Moguls. He came up to Gauhati at the head of a numerous army, but he died at that place before his forces could set their foot on the soil of Bengal for the contemplated invasion.

The Tungkhungia Dynasty of Ahom sovereigns which commenced with Gadadhar Singha, continued their sway till they were ousted by the Burmese in 1822, and the country passed off into the hands of the British in 1826 by the Treaty of Yandaboo.<sup>99</sup>

### RAJA RAM SINGHA OF AMBER

Raja Ram Singha, the antagonist of the Assamese general Lachit Barphukan, was a member of the Rajput clan of the Kuchchwas who claimed their descent from Kusa, the second son of Sri Rama Chandra, the hero of Valmiki's *Ramayana*. Nala Raja, husband of Damayanti, and king of Nishidha, was also regarded as a descendant of Kusa.

Dhola Rai, the earliest prince recorded in the dynastic annals of the Kuchchwas, founded the state of Dhoondar

<sup>99</sup>. Bhuyan, S.K., *Tungkhungia Buranjì*, Assamese and English versions, for the history of the rulers of the Tungkhungia Dynasty.

which became afterwards known as Amber, and now as Jaipur. Poojan, sixth in descent from Dhola Rai, married the sister of Prithviraj, the Chauhan emperor of Delhi, and commanded a division of his brother-in-law's army in the early conflicts with the Muslims, and died fighting in an engagement against the invading force.

A prince of the Kuchchwa clan, Raja Baharmal of Amber, was the first among the Rajputs to pay homage to the Muslim power. He threw himself on the side of Babar, the first Mogul emperor of Delhi. The Kuchchwas were also the first Rajput clan to establish matrimonial alliances with the Muslim rulers. Raja Baharmal's eldest daughter was married to Emperor Akbar in 1562, and she became the mother of Prince Selim, afterwards Emperor Jahangir, who in his turn married in 1584 the daughter of Bhagavandas, heir of Raja Baharmal.<sup>100</sup>

Man Singha, nephew and adopted son of Raja Bhagavandas, entered the imperial service in 1562, and rose in time to the high rank of a commander of 7,000. In 1589, Man Singha succeeded Bhagavandas as Raja of Amber. He served for some time as the Mogul governor of Kabul, and subsequently as governor of Bihar, Hajipur and Patna, as well as of the province of Bengal. He was almost practically independent in the government of his extensive dominions which he ruled with great prudence and justice.<sup>101</sup>

As a military commander Man Singha led numerous expeditions on behalf of his imperial allies, thereby con-

100. Tod, James, *Rajasthan*, II, pp. 318-326.

101. Smith, Sir Vincent A., *Akbar*, pp. 57-58, 223.

tributing to the expansion and consolidation of Mogul supremacy in India. His active and life-long devotion to Mogul imperialistic designs stood in bold contrast to the unflinching determination of the Sisodia Rajput prince, Maharana Pratap of Mewar, to resist by all means any political and matrimonial alliance with the Timurid rulers. After a series of engagements the armies of the two Rajput princes were brought face to face in a deadly array in the ever-memorable battle of Haldighat. Maharana Pratap riding on his horse Chitak attacked Raja Man Singha seated on his elephant, and hurled his javelin at the redoubtable Kuchchwa. Man Singha averted his blow by diving into his howdah. The result was however unfavourable to Pratap; but though he sustained a defeat he did not swerve from his resolution to offer continued resistance to the Moguls.<sup>102</sup>

The rivalries and jealousies of the two princes of Cooch Behar, Lakshminarayan and Raghudeb, brought Man Singha into the arena of Kamarupa politics. Lakshminarayan acknowledged the supremacy of the Moguls, and sought their assistance in suppressing Raghudeb who had succeeded in obtaining the support of the Afghans of Bengal under Isa Khan. Man Singha, the viceroy of Bengal, attacked Isa Khan, and prevented the junction of the Afghans with the troops of Raghudeb. Raghudeb then solicited the help of the Ahom monarch Swargadeo Sukhampha Khora Raja, to whom he offered his daughter Mangaldoi.

Raja Man Singha is uniformly called "Raja Mandhata" in the old Assamese chronicles, and in one or

102. Sharma, Sri Ram, *Maharana Pratap*, pp. 74-75.

two places as "Raja Makunda". He figures in those chronicles as a commander of 8,000 and as a great general, whom the Mogul Emperor kept incessantly busy in distant warfares, and the Raja once complained to his Rajput veterans,—“The Emperor is afraid lest in a period of respite from war I construct my forts and assume independence. I am despatched to all the wars, and I do not get any time for rest; my soldiers are unduly harassed, and they curse me in consequence.”

Man Singha was commanded to lead an expedition to Bengal against its Afghan ruler—miscalled Hussain Shah in the Assamese narrative.<sup>103</sup> On his way to Bengal Man Singha orders the construction of a temple at Mathura dedicated to Kesavrai Gosain, and a brick-house at Brindaban for the shelter of the monkeys. He performed Sraddha at Gaya. He then subdued Kiledar Khan, the refractory chief of Benares.

Man Singha despatched an ultimatum to Hussain Shah of Gaur,—“Your forefathers were on friendly terms with the Emperors of Delhi. Now, what pride has prompted you to turn your back against the Emperor Jahangir? Specially I am Mandhata, Raja of Amber. I have borne in my armpit dozens of Padshahs like yourself; I have caused the death of many, while others have

103. Alauddin Hussain Shah was the ruler of Bengal from 1489 to 1520 A.D. Man Singha had a tough fight with the rebellious Usman Khan of Bengal in 1599, but the Kuchchwa general was unable to “uproot the thorn of Uthman Khan's rebellion.” The Afghan uprising was quelled and Usman killed in 1612 by Shaikh Kabir Suhja'at Khan during the governorship of Islam Khan Chisti Faruqui. Man Singha was withdrawn from Bengal in 1606. *Maasir-ul-* and Bainsi Prashad, I, pp. 692-693; M. I. Borah, vol. II, Notes, pp. 794-795.

been released through my intervention. So you should come and offer your submission to me." To this Hussain Shah replied,—“Jahangir is the Padshah of Delhi, and so am I of Gaur. There was friendly interchange of embassies before. He had discontinued sending men, and so have I. Mandhata is only an Omrao; why should I, a Padshah, pay my homage to him? What touch of genius has led him to pen such a letter? If he has come for war, let him come.” The letter of Man Singha was torn to pieces, and the envoy turned out by Hussain Shah.

Hussain Shah sought the support of the leading chiefs of Bengal Isa Khan Masandali, Raghunath Raja, and the Raja of Cooch Behar, but they hesitated to support the Afghan ruler against a general of Man Singha's eminence. In the war that ensued Hussain Shah perished in the battle-field, being pierced to death by Thakur Chandraval, the Raja's uncle. The Bengal chiefs then offered their submission to Man Singha. Dacca was renamed Jahangirnagar.

On his way back to Delhi, Man Singha saw Brahmans reading the *Markandeya-chandi* on the bank of the Ganges. Having heard of the merits of such recital, Man Singha gave the priests a present of one thousand rupees.

Emperor Jahangir, according to the Assamese chronicle, allowed Man Singha to retain his old rank of a commander of 8,000; and gave him a cash reward of rupees three lakhs for “eating *pan* and *tambul*.” About the Afghan ruler of Bengal, Man Singha said to Jahangir—“Hussain Shah is the greatest of all the soldiers I have encountered in my military engagements in different

places. His courage is indomitable, and he fights without caring for his life. He has been killed only through the prowess of the Emperor. He is peerless in heroism."<sup>104</sup>

Man Singha died in 1614. Rani Prabhavati, Lakshminarayan's sister, who had been given in marriage to Man Singha, died in the funeral pyre of her husband.<sup>105</sup> Man Singha was succeeded on the throne of Amber by Bhao Singha, and the latter by Maha Singha. These two princes died prematurely as a result of intemperate and dissipated habits.

Jai Singha, commonly known as Mirza Raja Jai Singha, was the grandson of Jagat Singha, brother of Bhagavandas.<sup>106</sup> Jodhbai, daughter of Rao Singha, of Bikaner, and consort of Emperor Jahangir, supported the cause of Jai Singha as successor to Maha Singha, though it was opposed by the Emperor's favourite queen Nur Jahan.

Maharaja Jai Singha revived the heroic fame of the house of Kuchchwa. He rendered great service to the Mogul empire, and rose ultimately to the rank of a commander of 6,000. He had 22,000 Rajput cavalry at his disposal, and 22 powerful vassal chieftains as commanders under him, and he was considered as being capable of subverting the authority of the Moguls if he ever intended to do so.

104. Bhuyan, S.K., *Annals of the Delhi Badshahate*, paragraphs 40-52, *Islamic Culture* for April 1933.

105. Amanatullah Ahmed, Khan Chaudhury, *History of Cooch Behar*, I, p. 138.

106. Beveridge, H., and Baini Prashad, tr. of *Maasir-ul-Umara*, I, life-sketch of Mirza Raja Jai Singha, pp. 731-734.

Sir Jadunath Sarkar in his *Shivaji and His Times* has very forcefully summed up the great Kuchchwas' achievements and genius: "Jai Singha's career has been one of undimmed brilliancy from the day when he, an orphan of twelve, received his first appointment in the Mughal army (1617). Since then he had fought under the imperial banner in every part of the empire,—from Balkh in Central Asia to Bijapur in the Deccan, from Qandahar in the west to Mungir in the east. Hardly a year had passed during the long reign of Shah Jahan when this Rajput chieftain had not seen active service somewhere and received some promotion for conspicuous merit. His marked ability had found recognition in his being given the command of the van or one of the wings in the Mughal armies led by princes of the royal blood in campaigns beyond India. Latterly he commanded in chief. In diplomacy he had attained to a success surpassing even his victories in the field. Whenever there was a difficult or delicate work to be done, the Emperor had only to turn to Jai Singha. A man of infinite tact and patience, an adept in the ceremonial courtesy of the Muslims, a master of Turki and Persian, besides Urdu and Rajput dialects, he was an ideal leader of the composite army of Afghans and Turks, Rajputs and Hindusthanis, that followed the crescent banner of the sovereigns of Delhi."<sup>107</sup>

It is recorded in an old Assamese chronicle that Jai Singha's power and influence caused great anxiety to Emperor Shah Jahan, and he proposed to annex Amber to the Mogul dominions. The Emperor however wanted

107. Sarkar, Sir Jadunath, *Shivaji*, pp. 121-122.

to see for himself the strength and resources of the Amber Raja. Jai Singha went in advance to Amber to make preparations for the reception of Shah Jahan. The Raja's Rajput counsellors proposed to seize the person of the Emperor, imprison him, and place Jai Singha on the Delhi throne. But Jai Singha discountenanced this treacherous project. The route for the Emperor's journey was lined with soldiers attired in war uniform, and armed with weapons. On reaching Amber, the Emperor saw only spears and swords in whatever direction he happened to cast his eyes. Of course, nothing untoward was meant to the Emperor, and he returned to Delhi satisfied with the reception at Amber.

According to the same chronicle, Jai Singha was then deputed to Eastern India to suppress the disloyal chiefs of Orissa, Rajmahal, Morung and Cooch Behar; and to quell the disturbances and ravages committed by the rulers of Dacca, Chittagong and Sylhet. Jai Singha from his camp at Patna sent letters to the refractory chiefs demanding their submission. The Raja of Cooch Behar sent valuable presents to the Emperor, and promised to pay an annual *selami* of one lakh of rupees during the Nao-Roza festival. The Rajas of Morung and Nepal surrendered voluntarily. Raja Subal Singha of Orissa offered rich presents to Jai Singha and his soldiers. The Rajput Raja worshipped at the temple of Jagannath. The Padshah conferred on him the title of Mirza-Raja. After his return to Delhi Jai Singha was deputed to suppress the rebellion in Kashmir.<sup>108</sup>

108. Bhuyan, S.K., *Annals of the Delhi Badshahate*, paragraphs 66-76, Islamic Culture for April 1933.



Jai Singha had two sons, Ram Singha and Kirat Singha. The elder Ram Singha was associated with most of the campaigns and intrigues of his father. At the age of sixteen Ram Singha accompanied his father to Ajmer in the capacity of a junior commander. At nineteen he was made a commander of 1,000, and was raised soon afterwards to the rank of 2,500 horses, when he was also bestowed the royal standard. Emperor Shah Jahan promoted Ram Singha to the rank of 3,000. During the War of Succession, Ram Singha and his father took up the cause of Dara Shukoh, the eldest son of Shah Jahan. Ram Singha was in the battle of Samugarh. Dara's defeat in that momentous engagement sealed his fate and gave the sceptre to his brother Aurangzeb, to whom Ram Singha and his father now transferred their allegiance and support. Ram Singha served for some time under Shahzada Muhammad Sultan and Nawab Mir Jumla in the pursuit of Prince Shuja, and took part later in the capture of Dara's son Sulaiman Shukoh at Srinagar.<sup>109</sup>

The most notable event in the career of Mirza Raja Jai Singha and his son Ram Singha was the expedition against the Mahratta hero Shivaji Maharaja, culminating in the latter's submission, his visit to Agra and his escape from custody. Shivaji's exploits in the Deccan were viewed with anxiety by Emperor Aurangzeb. Nawab Shaista Khan, the Mogul viceroy of the Deccan, was attacked by Shivaji in the bed-room of the viceregal residence at Poona on the night of 5th April 1663. The

109. Life-sketch of Raja Ram Singha in *Maasir-ul-Umara*, Persian Text, II, pp. 301-303; J.A.S.B., 1872, p. 98-n; Memorandum on Ram Singha received from Mr. M. M. Khambatha.

viceroy escaped with the loss of his thumb, and his son was killed by Shivaji's men. In the beginning of January 1664, Shivaji plundered the rich city of Surat from where he carried off above a crore of rupees. Prince Muzzam, the new viceroy of the Deccan, and his general Maharaja Jaswant Singha Rathor were no match for Shivaji's intrepidity and tact, and the Moguls could not obtain any tangible success in their campaigns against the great Mahratta.

In September 1664, Aurangzeb appointed Jai Singha to lead an expedition against Shivaji. The Kuchchwa Raja promised to deliver Shivaji into the hands of the Emperor alive, whereupon Aurangzeb took out from his neck the necklace of pearls which he usually wore and put it on Jai Singha's neck.<sup>110</sup> The commanders placed under Jai Singha were: Dilir Khan Daudzai, Daud Khan Qureshi, Raja Rai Singha Sisodia, and Jai Singha's two sons Ram Singha and Kirat Singha. On this occasion Ram Singha was decorated by Aurangzeb with robes of honour, gold ornaments and elephants.<sup>111</sup> Jai Singha was also placed in charge of the government of the Deccan in place of Prince Muazzam who was recalled.

Jai Singha arrived at Poona on the 3rd March 1665, when he took over charge of the Deccan army from Maharaja Jaswant Singha. To bring the Mahrattas to submission Jai Singha employed all the arts of warfare—dissension in the enemy's camp and corruption of the leading commanders of the opposite side. The Raja's spies met everyone who bore a grudge against Shivaji,

110. Deshpande, Baba Saheb, *Escape of Shivaji*, pp. 46-47.

111. *Maasir-ul-Umara*, Text, II, pp. 301-303, life-sketch of Ram Singha.

or envied the sudden rise of the Bhonsla clan to which Shivaji belonged. Shivaji's officers were tempted to desert their master by promises of high rank in the Mogul service. These diplomatic efforts were accompanied by strenuous and elaborate preparations to storm the strongholds of the Mahrattas. The Moguls suffered some reverses in the beginning, and a bitter quarrel broke out between Dilir Khan and Daud Khan. There were also differences between Jai Singha and Dilir Khan. The Raja had planned to bring Shivaji to submission by diplomatic manoeuvres, but the Khan erected batteries against the fort of Purandar during the progress of the negotiations. A contingent of Mawlis and Konkanese beat Dilir Khan's assault back. These reverses were admitted by Jai Singha when he said,—“Sometimes we have failed to prevent the enemy from accomplishing their hostile designs.” The news of the successes of the Mahrattas in the Mogul campaigns under Jaswant Singha and Jai Singha reached the distant court of the king of Assam who proposed to utilise the opportunity offered by the discomfiture of the imperialists in the Deccan by launching an attack upon them with a view to expel them from Gauhati and Kamrup.<sup>112</sup> But soon the tide of war turned in favour of the Moguls. Dilir Khan stormed Purandar, and aided by a fresh reinforcement of artillery the Moguls succeeded in destroying all vestiges of Mahratta opposition.

After the fall of Purandar fort in June 1665 Shivaji had no other alternative but to sue for terms. He met Jai Singha and Dilir Khan in their respective camps, and

112. Ms. Assam Buranji No. 3, No. 8; vide also Letter No. 13 in Appendix III, *post*e.

agreed to cede a number of forts and a large part of his dominions. Jai Singha then persuaded Shivaji to go to Agra, and plied him with hopes of reward including the viceroyalty of the Deccan. On one occasion Jai Singha said to Shivaji,— “As you have restored and defended the overthrown Hindu religion I am pleased with you. As Ram Singha is my son so are you.”<sup>113</sup> Ram Singha in his turn pledged his word for the safety of Shivaji at the Mogul capital.

Emperor Aurangzeb ratified the stipulations entered into by Jai Singha and Shivaji, and he wrote to the Mahratta leader on the 5th March 1666,— “We have a great regard for you, and therefore desire you to come here quickly and without further loss of time. When we grant you audience we shall receive you with great hospitality, and soon grant you leave to return.” Led by these assurances Shivaji decided to go to Agra with his son Sambhaji, leaving the charge of the state to his mother Jijabai and three other leaders. The proposal to visit Agra was also supported by Shivaji’s Guru Ramdas, who thought that Shivaji would thereby remove all suspicion from Aurangzeb’s mind.<sup>114</sup>

Before leaving for Agra Shivaji met Jai Singha in the latter’s camp near Bijapur. The Rajput Raja accorded a warm reception to Shivaji, and asked his son Ram Singha to accompany the Mahratta leader in the journey to Agra. Jai Singha instructed his son to see to the safety of Shivaji, and specially emphasised that Ram Singha was to help Shivaji if he fell into any kind of

113. Sen, S.N., *Siva Chhatrapati*, p. 210.

114. Kincaid and Parasnis, *History of the Maratha People*, I, pp. 216, 225.

danger. In the journey to the Mogul capital Shivaji was constantly thrown into the company of Ram Singha, and by the time they reached Agra the prince of Amber became a devoted friend of the Mahratta hero.<sup>115</sup>

When Shivaji reached the neighbourhood of Agra, Ram Singha went in advance to meet the Emperor to inform him of Shivaji's arrival. Aurangzeb instructed Ram Singha to bring Shivaji at once to the court. The only officer who accompanied Ram Singha to receive Shivaji was Mukhlis Khan, a commander of 2,000. The receptoin accorded to Shivaji was thus far below his expectation.

On the 12th May 1666, Shivaji and his son Sambhaji were taken to the Emperor's court in a full assemblage of nobles and courtiers and they were introduced by Ram Singha. Shivaji made three *salams* to the Emperor from his position at the foot of the throne, and presented a *nazar* of thirty thousand rupees. After a brief exchange of questions and replies, Aurangzeb ordered Ram Singha to conduct Shivaji to the place reserved for him amongst the commanders of 5,000.

This was a great insult to Shivaji who had recently commanded 10,000 men, while his son Sambhaji and his lieutenant Netaji Palkar had each been given the command of 5,000 during the Mogul campaign against Bijapur. Shivaji turned to Ram Singha and gave free vent to his resentment, reminding the Rajput prince of the promises held out by him and his father Jai Singha. Shivaji fell down in a swoon; and the result was a com-

115. Kincaid and Parasnis, *Maratha People*, p. 217.

motion among the courtiers. In his explanation to the Emperor, Ram Singha attributed Shivaji's unseemly conduct to the Deccani leader's natural ignorance of the manners of the Mogul court and the great heat of Agra.<sup>116</sup>

The incident furnished the Emperor ample evidence of Shivaji's refractory and ungovernable temper. He dismissed Shivaji from the court without any ceremony or return of presents. He was ordered to be conducted to the palace of Jai Singha outside the city walls, and in the vicinity of the enclosures of the Taj Mahal, and a strong guard under Polad Khan, Kotwal of Agra, was placed round the house.<sup>117</sup> Shivaji was thus made a state-prisoner at the Mogul capital. Ram Singha was ordered by the Emperor to be responsible for Shivaji's custody.

It was not difficult for Shivaji to realise the imminent peril of his situation, which was nothing short of life-long imprisonment, accompanied by the prospect of death. Jai Singha was himself mortified to find that his plans about Shivaji were thus frustrated. From his camp at Aurangabad he addressed letters to Aurangzeb asking the Emperor to convert Shivaji into a friend which step, he represented, would be beneficial to imperial interests. Jai Singha also sent repeated instructions to Ram Singha to see that no personal harm was done to Shivaji, and that the assurance of safety given out by them were

116. Sarkar, *Shivaji*, p. 176; Vaidya, *Shivaji*, pp. 188-9.

117. The house no longer exists. According to *Padishah-namah*, the land covered by the Taj had belonged to Jai Singha and Shah Jahan purchased it from him to build the Taj, Deshpande's *Escape of Shivaji*, p. 80.

rigidly observed. Aurangzeb's mind had meanwhile been poisoned against Shivaji by distorted stories of his encounters with Afzal Khan and Shaista Khan; and Shivaji's petitions for permission to return to the Deccan met with indifference, though they were not rejected formally. Ram Singha interceded with the Emperor on Shivaji's behalf, but the Rajput prince was told that the matter was no longer his concern.

Living as a prisoner in the palace of Jai Singha at Agra Shivaji was fretting and fuming within himself seeing his hopes and plans dashed to pieces with no immediate prospect of recovering his freedom.<sup>118</sup> Outwardly he assumed an attitude of submission to the Emperor and resignation to his fate. He also kept the nobles in humour by professions and tokens of friendship. Ram Singha spent large sums of money to get reliable information about Aurangzeb's intentions against Shivaji. The Emperor proposed to remove Shivaji to Polad Khan's palace when its construction would be completed. Ram Singha obtained reports of these orders and communicated them to Shivaji.<sup>119</sup>

Shivaji had then no other alternative but to fall upon his own resources for means of escape. He evolved a plan which was a master-stroke of his genius as it threw dust into the eyes of the astute and vigilant Emperor. He obtained Aurangzeb's permission for the return of his escort to the Deccan; and also proposed to bring his

118. Bhuyan, S.K., *Mir Jumla and Ram Singha in Assam*, J.I.H., December 1926.

119. Kincaid and Parasnis, *History of the Maratha People*, p. 219; Deshpande, *Escape of Shivaji*, p. 93.

wives and mother to Agra whom he would be able to maintain with the money saved by him by carefully managing his expenses at the Mogul capital. When the Emperor heard about this proposal he smiled at the avaricious spirit of the Mahratta chief. Shivaji expressed a desire to send sweetmeats to Brahmans, pirs and faqirs, and choice dishes prepared in the Deccani manner to the nobles. Ram Singha and Balaji Aoji Chitnis approached Rahulla Khan, the Finance Minister; and through the latter's intervention obtained the Emperor's permission to send out baskets of sweets and dishes from Shivaji's residence. Mammoth wicker-work baskets containing delicacies accordingly passed out of the gate; and Shivaji's friends similarly sent to him presents in return. At first Polad Khan's watchmen examined the baskets very carefully, but afterwards they relaxed their vigilance as the exits and entrances of the baskets were considered as matters of common daily occurrence. The watchmen were themselves plied with presents and sweets which made them look upon Shivaji as a very generous man whom the Emperor had cruelly imprisoned. They allowed the baskets to pass after a few had been opened and examined. Shivaji then pretended to be ill, and sent for the best physicians in Agra. After a few days Shivaji declared himself better, and ordered more baskets of sweetmeats to be prepared and sent out to his friends that they might rejoice with him at his recovery. He also sent out three horses along the Mathura road as presents to Brahmans there whose prayers to Sri Krishna had brought about his recovery.

On the 19th August 1666, Shivaji and his son Sambhaji entered into two such baskets of sweetmeats, and were carried out of the mansion through a line of unsuspecting



guards. Coming out of Agra, Shivaji and his son got out of their baskets, and joined their trusted friends who had been waiting with the three horses sent in advance by Shivaji. The party then made their way to Mathura where they assumed the disguise of religious mendicants. Travelling through Allahabad, Benares, Puri, Gondwana, Haidarabad and Bijapur territories, Shivaji reached Poona towards the end of December 1666. Shivaji threw off his disguise, and publicly announced his return. Poona became the scene of great rejoicings, and officers and soldiers hastened in thousands to pay their respects to Shivaji and hear from his own lips the story of his romantic escape.

At Agra, Shivaji's escape created a great sensation. Aurangzeb despatched orders to all local officers to institute a vigorous search for Shivaji. As Ram Singha was the officer appointed by the Emperor to look after Shivaji he was held responsible for the prisoner's escape. Some Mahratta Brahmans who were caught admitted that Shivaji had fled under the advice and with the connivance of Ram Singha. From the manner in which Ram Singha had fraternised with Shivaji and sponsored his cause, the Emperor readily believed in the Rajput prince's complicity in the affair. He was punished by being forbidden to attend the court, and he was subsequently deprived of his rank and pay.<sup>120</sup>

The humiliation of Ram Singha severely mortified his aged father Raja Jai Singha. In a letter written about that time the Raja attributed his present misfortune to the work of fate against which there is no remedy. "I

120. Sarkar, *Shivaji*, p. 186; Bernier, *Travels*, pp. 190-191.

learn from the letters of some court agents", continued Jai Singha in the letter, "that there is a proposal to dismiss Ram Singha from his mansab and jagirs because Shivaji's Brahman followers, at the instigation of selfish men, have alleged that the flight of Shivaji was due to the advice of Ram Singha, and resulted from the latter's omission to watch him well. May God give death to the man who cherishes the very thought of such an act of faithlessness in his heart!"<sup>121</sup>

After the flight of Shivaji, Jai Singha continued for some time in the Deccan, engaged in the war against Bijapur. His resources both of men and money were soon exhausted, and the petitions for reinforcement sent by him to the Emperor were treated with indifference and neglect. Aurangzeb seemed to have a suspicion that Jai Singha would enter into an alliance with Shivaji and defy the armies of the empire. This attitude of indifference and suspiciousness on the part of Aurangzeb led Jai Singha to conclude that it was a thankless task to sacrifice the lives of his Rajput stalwarts in an inglorious defeat by the Bijapur force. The Raja therefore withdrew his armies to Aurangabad. It was with extreme difficulty that Jai Singha was able to garrison the forts ceded by Shivaji. On the pretext of Jai Singha's failure in the expedition against Bijapur, and the alleged connivance of Ram Singha at the escape of Shivaji, Aurangzeb passed orders superseding the Mirza Raja in the government of the Deccan by Prince Muazzam. Jaswant Singha was directed to accompany the prince as his second-in-command.<sup>122</sup>

121. Sarkar, *Shivaji*, p. 194.

122. Takakhav and Keluskar, *Shivaji Maharaja*, p. 299.

In May 1667, Jai Singha was formally relieved of his charge of the viceroyalty of the Deccan. In obedience to the Emperor's orders he set out for the Mogul capital, broken-hearted and disappointed, and worn out with age, toil and a sense of public humiliation. But he died on his way at Burhanpur on the 2nd July 1667. It was believed in some quarters that his second son Kirat Singha poisoned his father at the instigation of Aurangzeb. The general reaction to Aurangzeb's treatment of Jai Singha was of the nature of a remembrance of the services rendered to the Emperor by the Kucchwa Raja, as we know from Niccolao Manucci, who had served as an artillery officer under the Raja and his son Kirat Singha.<sup>123</sup> This reaction is reflected in the letter written by Jai Singha's widowed queen and Ram Singha's wife to the latter during his stay in Assam.

After the death of Jai Singha his elder son Ram Singha, became ruler of Amber, though Aurangzeb favoured the succession of Kirat Singha, whom however, the people would not accept in view of his alleged patricide.

Aurangzeb was too shrewd a politician to allow a Rajput grievance to continue for an indefinite period. Ram Singha was readmitted to royal favour, and was awarded the title of Raja with the rank of a commander of 4,000. He also received from the Emperor presents of robes, a decorated sword, a pearl necklace, an Arabian steed with golden saddlery, and an elephant caparisoned with a gold-embroidered cloth and jewels.<sup>124</sup> Aurangzeb did not however forget the part played by Ram Singha in the escape of Shivaji, though he attempted to conceal

123. Manucci, *Storia do Mogor*, tr. Irvine, II, pp. 252-253.

124. *Maasr-ul-Umara*, Text, II, pp. 301-303.

his real feelings in the glamour of the presents and decorations bestowed on the new Raja of Amber.

Towards the end of 1667, the Emperor received reports of the Assamese attack on Gauhati, followed by the defeat of the Moguls and their expulsion from Lower Assam, and the capture of Syed Firoz Khan, Thanadar of Gauhati. The Emperor resolved to punish the Assamese, and appointed Ram Singha to the command of the imperial corps despatched against Assam.

In the imagination of the people of Mogul India, Assam figured as a wild and unhealthy country from where few men could return hale and sound. The death of Nawab Mir Jumla immediately after his departure from Assam heightened this popular belief. The deputation of Raja Ram Singha to Assam was therefore commonly considered to be a punishment for his support of Shivaji. "Service in Assam was extremely unpopular", says Sir Jadunath Sarkar, "and no soldier would go there unless compelled. Indeed, there is reason to believe that Ram Singha was sent to Assam as a punishment for his having secretly helped Shivaji to escape from captivity at Agra."<sup>125</sup> This opinion is confirmed by Manucci who says,—“As a further piece of revenge for the flight of Shivaji, Aurangzeb ordered Ram Singha, the Rajah's (Jai Singha) eldest son, to proceed upon the conquest of Assam, simply in the hope of getting rid of him, knowing what had happened there to the great Mir Jumla.”<sup>126</sup> This view also receives corroboration from the contemporary Assamese chronicles.

125. Sarkar, *Aurangzeb*, III, pp. 213-214.

126. Manucci, *Storia do Mogor*, tr. Irvine, II, p. 153.

In addition to Shivaji, another great leader owed his liberty to the intervention of Ram Singha, which furnished a second reason for Aurangzeb's displeasure. According to an old Assamese chronicle, the Sikh Guru Teg Bahadur defied the authority of the Emperor, and roamed about preaching heterodox doctrines to the chagrin and indignation of Brahman Bhattacharyyas and Muslim Kazis, "plundering and destroying the country, attended by thirty thousand Nanak-panthi sepoys." The Emperor ordered his execution, whereupon the Guru sought the protection of Ram Singha who became a surety. The Guru made his escape soon afterwards, and Aurangzeb held Ram Singha responsible for it. To this the Rajput prince replied,—“What is he? Only a Raja or a Nawab is worthy of Your Majesty's vengeance. He is only a mendicant faqir. To accuse me for his escape will cause people to laugh when they hear of it.” Aurangzeb kept his displeasure to himself and refrained from punishing Ram Singha at the moment in recollection of the services rendered to the Moguls by the Kuchchwa princes, and for fear of a concerted anti-Mogul conspiracy on the part of the Rajas as a repercussion to such punishment.

But soon an opportunity offered itself when the Emperor received report of the discomfiture of the Moguls in Assam referred to above. The Assamese chronicle continues: “On receiving this intelligence the Padshah said to Ram Singha,—‘Raja Jai Singha, son of Raja Mandhata, fought in the Bengal war and subdued the province. Now, you proceed to the war with Assam.’ The reason for which the Padshah said thus to Ram Singha was this: Not a single Nawab who had been deputed to the Assam war could ever come

back safely ; some died of themselves, while others were killed in the battle ; the waters of Assam are poisonous, its air unhealthy, and its hills are covered with dense forests ; and the Emperor wanted that Ram Singha should die in Assam. Devising this plan, the Padshah deputed Ram Singha to Assam."<sup>127</sup>

Ram Singha's championship of the cause of the Sikh Guru Teg Bahadur is mentioned by J. D. Cunningham, the historian of the Sikhs, who, on the authority of a Gurmukhi biography of Teg Bahadur's life, states that the Guru was summoned to Delhi as "a pretender to power and a disturber of the peace, but he had found a listener in the chief of Jaipur." The chief advocated the Guru's cause, and explained to the Emperor that such holy men would prefer to go on a pilgrimage instead of seeking for sovereignty, and he offered to take Teg Bahadur on his approaching march to Bengal. The Guru accompanied Ram Singha's army in the expedition against Assam, and he meditated on the banks of the river Brahmaputra.<sup>128</sup>

In taking Guru Teg Bahadur with him in his Assam expedition Ram Singha was no doubt inspired by the hope that the Guru's presence would exercise a sobering influence upon the soldiers, and counteract any tendency towards indiscipline and excess. From a manuscript document in possession of the mahant of the Gurudwar Damdame at Dhubri it is learnt that Ram Singha counted upon the Guru's ability to undo the effects of the black arts for which Assam had a reputation all over

127. Bhuvan, S.K., *Annals of the Delhi Badshahate*, paragraphs 116-120, Islamic Culture for January 1934.

128. Cunningham, J.D., *History of the Sikhs*, pp. 63-64.

India, and which, in the estimation of the Raja, were sure to be practised against himself and his army. Ram Singha also took with him for the same purpose five Muslim pirs,—Shah Akbar, Shah Bagmar, Shah Saran, Shah Safi and Shah Kamal. There is a Muslim shrine still at Dhubri, known as Panchpirar Darga, where the remains of Shah Akbar are buried.<sup>129</sup>

According to the accounts preserved in the Sikh chronicles written in the Gurmukhi dialect, Ram Singha, accompanied by his ministers and a large retinue of soldiers, met the Guru at Patna, and begged the saint's protection and blessing. In this interview Ram Singha dilated on Man Singha's expedition to Kamrup. "O true Guru," said Ram Singha, "we Rajas of Hindustan were subject to the Emperor Akbar. The king of Kamrup alone became a rebel, and defied his authority. The Emperor then expressed his desire that some brave general should take an army and conquer that country. The Emperor's wishes were communicated to the bravest Muhammadan officers, none of them volunteered for the expedition. On the contrary they represented that even with the greatest bravery it would be impossible to carry out the Emperor's design." Man Singha's name was suggested in this connection, and Akbar ordered him to lead the expedition against Kamrup. "The tents of Man Singha's army", continued Ram Singha, "extended for miles on the frontier, and notwithstanding the spells and incantations of the inhabitants of Kamrup, Man Singha was completely successful." Ram Singha then referred to the disastrous expedition of Nawab Mir Jumla while

129. Bhuyan, S.K., *New Lights on Mogul India from Assamese sources*, Islamic Culture for July 1923, pp. 385-386-n.

in Assam, how the Nawab's cavalry was cut off, and pestilence destroyed his infantry, and he himself died of exposure and fatigue before he reached Dacca.<sup>130</sup>

Ram Singha then acquainted the Guru with the Emperor's orders to himself. "Aurangzeb's advisers", said the Raja, "have suggested that he should send me. They say if I conquer the country it will be an addition to his sovereignty; and if I be killed, the Emperor may annex the whole of Rajputana. The Emperor accordingly sent for me and ordered me to go to Kamrup." Ram Singha then related how his mother and queens had become alarmed at the news. "They asked me", continued Ram Singha before Guru Teg Bahadur, "if I desired an untimely death. They represented that there was none so brave as Mir Jumla, and if he perished what hope was there for me? Of all the generals who had been sent on that errand none except Raja Man Singha had ever returned. Then I too saw the danger of my position. It was certain death to command the invading army, and it would be equally fatal for me to disobey the Emperor's orders."

Ram Singha's principal queen, said the Raja, had saved him from this awful predicament, by asking him to go and seek the protection and support of Guru Teg Bahadur who had now been seated on the throne of Guru Nanak, of whom the queen's ancestors were disciples. The Raja admitted that the cheering advice of the queen had consoled him, and he had regained his peace of mind.

Guru Teg Bahadur asked Raja Ram Singha to continually meditate on God's name. "Guru Nanak will

130. Macauliffe, Max Arthur, *Sikh Religion*, IV, pp. 348-352, 360.



assist thee", said the Guru, "and thou shall conquer Kamrup." Ram Singha became extremely delighted having received the blessing of the Guru. He offered a prayer and distributed sacred food to the assembly. Ram Singha then received from Guru Teg Bahadur formal initiation as a Sikh by the ceremony of *Charan-pahul*. The Raja then requested the Guru to accompany the expedition, to which he agreed. The Guru admitted afterwards that he had accompanied Raja Ram Singha in the triple capacity of friend to the Raja, preacher of God's word, and averter of bloodshed.

The Guru preached the Sikh religion throughout the places traversed by the army. Ram Singha halted for some days at Dacca where he received a very cordial reception from Nawab Shaista Khan, the Bengal viceroy, who had been an intimate friend of Raja Jai Singha. The Nawab presented to Ram Singha precious elephants and horses, and a sword named *Khanjar* whose price amounted to 25,000 rupees. Shaista Khan warned Ram Singha about the noxious airs and poisonous waters of Assam, and asked him not to admit the women of the place into his camp, alleging that they were extremely cunning and wily. The Nawab promised to send the Raja reinforcements of food supplies and war materials whenever he would be informed of their shortage.<sup>131</sup>

At Dacca, Guru Teg Bahadur came across a very devout lady, the mother of one Baluki. Ram Singha proceeded from Dacca to Rangamati, the Mogul outpost near the frontier of Assam. A chief of Kamrup then

131. Bhuyan, S.K., *Annals of the Delhi Badshahate*, paragraph 120, Islamic Culture for January 1934.

attempted to overpower Ram Singha by incantations and spells, but he failed to achieve any result. The chief then employed the women of his land who were famous for their magical skill, but they also failed to attain any success owing to the presence of the Guru in the Rajput Raja's camp. The chief then offered sacrifices to Kamakhya, and made preparations to defeat Ram Singha. But an amicable settlement was soon reached through the intervention of the Guru.

The next stage of the march was Dhubri which, as mentioned by Guru Teg Bahadur, had been visited by Guru Nanak. At the instance of Teg Bahadur the soldiers raised a mound on the top of a hillock situated on the bank of the Brahmaputra, each man putting in five shieldfuls of earth. A pavilion was also erected on the mound. This place has now become the famous Gurudwar Damdame at Dhubri, and is visited by numerous pilgrims. Crowds came long distances to have the *darshan* of the Guru, and to obtain from him blessings for the fulfilment of their desires. The Guru was held in very great veneration throughout the country. A local chieftain, named Raja Ram, obtained a son through the blessings of the Guru.

During his stay at Dhubri, Teg Bahadur received the news that a son had been born to him at Patna. This happy event was celebrated at Ram Singha's camp by great rejoicings, accompanied by gun-fire, music and copious distribution of alms.<sup>132</sup> This son was Govinda, who became the Tenth Guru of the Sikhs after Teg Bahadur's execution by Emperor Aurangzeb in 1675.

132. Macauliffe, *Sikh Religion*, IV, pp. 352-358

After Teg Bahadur's departure from Dhubri, Ram Singha proceeded on his march to Assam. Some resistance was offered near the frontier, but it was speedily overcome. The objective of the Assamese was to grant the Mogul army a comparatively easy passage to the environs of Gauhati, where they would be able to offer a stiff resistance from their position inside the ring of fortifications surrounding the town on both banks of the Brahmaputra. Ram Singha first pitched his camp near Hazo, and shifted it later to the neighbouring villages and plains. The Raja's methods of warfare were precisely the same as those adopted by Jai Singha in the campaign against Shivaji. Ram Singha aimed at first to arrive at a settlement with the Assamese by diplomatic negotiations, accompanied by the usual round of oaths, promises and assurances, and backed by ostensible preparations for an armed conflict as an alternative. Persistent attempts were made to corrupt the Ahom commanders and nobles by bribery and presents, and by creating dissensions amongst them. But here in Assam Rajput strategy met with a complete failure, while it succeeded partially in the operations against the Mahratta leader. The issue was finally decided in March 1671 in the Battle of Saraighat fought in the waters near Gauhati in which the Mogul army of Raja Ram Singha were defeated and routed. The Rajput general complimented the Assamese on their organisation, solidarity and courage.

During the later stage of the conflict a report reached the camp of Ram Singha to the effect that Aurangzeb had engaged the Raja's son Kumar Krishna Singha in a combat with tigers, from which however the young prince came out victorious and uninjured. A messenger

from Amber also brought a letter from Ram Singha's widowed mother and his queen asking him to refrain from hostilities with Assam in view of the religious character of its people, and the futility of straining himself to please the Emperor. "The Padshah contrived the death of Krishna Singha", ran the Amber epistle, "by making him wrestle with tigers. The Emperor is such a friend to us! We have obtained sufficient fame and religious merit by subjugating other countries and making them accept the domination of the Padshah! Never think that the subjugation of the eastern kingdom [Assam] will add to our longevity and prosperity. We have heard that there is universal *nama-kirtan* [religious music and recital] in that country, and that cows, Brahmans and Vaisnavas are living there in peace and happiness. You know the consequences of bringing them under sway. By invading that country, Oh, how long could Mir Jumla thrive? He could not even reach back his old place. It is advisable therefore that you should come back. So take heed, and do as you think proper."<sup>133</sup>

The messenger also brought a verbal message from Nawab Shaista Khan, running as follows: "Well, tell Ram Singha, that for the fear of Assam the honour and prestige of the Nawabs and Rajas have remained intact. If that country is invaded and subjugated we shall be dishonoured as well."<sup>134</sup> Shaista Khan obviously meant that the existence of the powerful independent kingdom of Assam had made the Mogul Emperor considerate and

133. Bhuyan, S.K., *Assam Buranji S.M.* p. 121; H.C. Goswami's *Purani Assam Buranji*, p. 147; Ms. Assam Buranji No. 7.

134. Bhuyan, S.K., *Mir Jumla and Ram Singha in Assam*, J.I.H., December 1926; *Assam Buranji, S.M.*, p. 121.

careful in his dealings with his nobles and chiefs, as he had to count upon their help in times of emergency, when he projected an invasion of Assam, which could also be used as a rallying base by discontented and hostile nobles to mature and execute their plans of revenge. The position of the governor of Bengal was of great strategic importance in view of that Subah's close proximity to Assam.

After his defeat in Assam, Ram Singha retired with the remnant of his force to Rangamati, where he waited for an opportunity to reinvade the country; but he did not get any such opportunity as the Ahoms remained fully prepared to counteract any hostile move of the imperialists. In February 1676, Emperor Aurangzeb directed Ram Singha to come back from Rangamati before the rainy season had set in, making over charge of that place to the person to be nominated by Umdat-ul-mulk. The charge of Rangamati was first given to Abu Nasr Khan, and then to Ibn-i-Hussain Khan. In June 1676, Ram Singha paid his respects to the Emperor, his long stay in Assam and its frontier being evidently a punishment. According to one account Ram Singha died a natural death soon after his return to the Mogul capital, and according to another he died on duty in Kabul during 1687-88.<sup>135</sup>

Ram Singha was succeeded by his son Krishna or Kishan Singha, who had been held as a hostage by Aurangzeb during the absence of his father in the Assam expedition. Kishan Singha had served in Kabul for

135. Memorandum on Ram Singha received from Mr. Kham-batha, Jaipur; *Maasir-ul-Umara*, Text, II. pp. 301-303; J.A.S.B., 1872, pp. 98-99-n; Manucci, *Storia do Mogor*, tr. Irvine, II, p. 152-n.

some time. Aurangzeb conferred upon him a mansab of 3,000, but he died when young of a wound he had received during a civil war in Kabul. Bishen Singha succeeded Kishen Singha.

Bishen Singha rose to be a chief magistrate at Islamabad, and died in 1699, and was succeeded by his son Jai Singha, better known as Sawai Jai Singha in contradistinction to the first prince of that name, Mirza Raja Jai Singha, father of Ram Singha. Sawai Jai Singha participated in the embroils and wars of the period which was characterised by decay and disruption of Mogul power. In 1728 he founded the capital Jaipur, near the site of the old city of Amber. The palace built by Jai Singha at Jaipur has been compared to the Kremlin at Moscow.

But the greatest achievement of Jai Singha lay in the field of astronomical researches. His own knowledge of astronomy was so deep and extensive that he was entrusted by the Mogul Emperor Muhammad Shah with the reformation of the calendar. Jai Singha drew up a set of rules which he named *Zeij Mahommedshahi*, and dedicated them to the Emperor. By these tables, wrote Colonel James Tod in 1829, "all astronomical tables are yet made, and all almanacks constructed." He erected astronomical observatories with instruments of his own invention at Delhi, Jaipur, Benares and Muttra; and the accuracy of their calculations astonished the learned world. He carried on his astronomical researches in the midst of perpetual wars and court intrigues. Jai Singha used to keep a diary, termed *Kalpadruma*, in which he recorded every event in which he himself participated, or which came to his knowledge. He also collected a

During the war of succession Sawai Jai Singha championed the cause of the third prince Sultan Azam Shah, commonly known as Azamtara, who ascended the throne at Ahmadnagar on the 14th March 1707, eleven days after the death of Aurangzeb at that place. Jai Singha was on the side of Azamtara's son Bidar Bakht in the battle of Jajau. But the Rajput Raja deserted the young prince, and made his way to the camp of Muhammad Azim, the second son of Bahadur Shah. Sultan Azamtara was killed on the 20th June 1707 by a musket ball. Bidar Bakht had already been killed in the battle. Azam Shah's women and children received assurances of favour and protection from the victorious Bahadur Shah, now Emperor.<sup>137</sup>

136. *Tod Rajasthan*, II, pp. 328-339.

137. Irvine, William, *Later Mughals*, I, pp. 22-34. Azam Shah's surviving family included perhaps his Assamese consort, Princess Ramani Gabharu or Rahmat Banu Begum, to whom he had been married in May 1666. Bibliotheca Indica Text, p. 387, quoted in . . .

certed efforts of the Rajputs and the Mahrattas.<sup>138</sup> An old Assamese chronicle preserves the names of the Rajas and Zamindars who helped Jai Singha, together with their respective quotas of soldiers, horses, elephants and camels. The largest contribution came from Raja Malohar of Rampura-gram, with his 80,000 soldiers, 80 elephants, 500 horses and 8,000 camels.<sup>139</sup> In spite of his continued participation in imperial and inter-statal politics, Sawai Jai Singha found time to enlarge his patrimonial state of Amber. He died in 1743.

Jaipur is still flourishing as a premier native state of India under the aegis of the British, and its present ruler is His Highness Maharajadhiraj Sawai Man Singha Bahadur.

## CONCLUSION

With the materials at our disposal it is difficult to draw a full-length picture of Lachit Barphukan's personality and character. The Buranjis record only those aspects of his life which are connected with the political transactions of the state. He figures in the chronicles only as a link, a very important though, in the chain of political events.

Details of the private life of a historical personage, however eminent he may be, do not find any place in the Buranjis, unless the circumstances influence to some extent the decisions and measures of the government.

138. Sinha, H.N., *Rise of the Peshwas*, p. 108; Sir Jadunath Sarkar's *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, I, p. 277.

139. Bhuyan, *Annals of the Delhi Badshahate*, paragraph 131, Islamic Culture for January 1934.



Historiographers were strictly forbidden to give any prominence to unconnected personal details, as we learn from the injunction issued by King Siva Singha at the time of commissioning an Ahom Pandit to compile a chronicle of the rulers,—“The history should only contain the names and transactions of the Swargadeos.”<sup>140</sup> This limitation is deplorable as we have an abundance of personal biographies of the saints and religious preachers of Assam; and political biographies would have been compiled in any number if such compilation had been sanctioned by the usages of the country. Such biographies would have offered us intimate glimpses and touches revealing the workings of the inner minds, thereby enabling us to form an accurate estimate of the character of the leading figures of history.

Plutarch in his *Life of Alexander* has said,—“Often a man’s most brilliant actions prove nothing as to his true character, while some trifling incident, some casual remark or jest, will throw more light upon what manner of man he was than the bloodiest battle, the greatest array of armies, or the most important siege.”<sup>141</sup> Fortunately for us, the Buranjis have recorded instances, though desultory and sporadic, of both categories of details of Lachit Barphukan’s life, trifling incidents and casual remarks, as well as brilliant actions in the battle-field.

140. Wade, J. P., *Account of Assam*, p. 2. Sukapha, the first Ahom conqueror, during his victorious march to Assam, ordered his scribes,—“The Pandits should write down all particulars, whenever an incident takes place, and when a person dies, and when we acquire new followers.” S. K. Bhuyan’s *Deodhai Asam Buranji*; pp. xi, 90.

141. Stewart, Aubrey, and Long, George, *Plutarch’s Lives*, G. Bell and Sons, 1924, *Life of Alexander*, vol. III, p. 300.

The most outstanding feature of Lachit Barphukan's character was his very high sense of honour. It is an indefinable quality, though in its implications it comprises all that is good and noble in a man's character. It means the respect shown, both by intentions and actions, to an unwritten code of private and public conduct, the contravention of which would not entail any material injury upon the transgressor. In our private and domestic relations it means the ungrudging fulfilment of our promises, and of the expectations and hopes we have raised in others' minds by our conduct, words, and attitude. In public life, it is equivalent to whole-hearted devotion to one's duty without any consideration of personal gain or advantage. The man of honour is straightforward and just, and he adheres to his principles in the face of opposition and discomfort. Casuistries, sophistries and subterfuges and stilted efforts to justify perversities are unknown to an honourable man. His tribunal is the common sense of his countrymen and the verdict of posterity. Recognitions and benefits do not constitute the motives of his actions; rewards are too mundane, and he precludes them from the inventory of conditions in his services to his country. Such a man can be entrusted with the gravest responsibilities which he will discharge without the vigilance of a supervisor, for he cherishes in his heart the greatest of all supervisors—his own conscience. Though he is sensitive to attribution of cowardice and meanness, he is indifferent to the calumnies of interested opponents and the uncritical rabble as he is true to himself, and is unshakable in his faith in the moral order of the Universe.

Lachit Barphukan inherited the redeeming quality of a man of honour from his father Momai-tamuli Barbarua, whose sense of duty never deserted him whether he acted as a farm-labourer, or as a high dignitary of the state, or as a military commander. The father like his son, had played the part of a man of destiny in the most critical period of his country's history.

In his glorious but meteoric career Lachit Barphukan has afforded enough examples of this quality of his character. However humble his duties were he applied himself wholeheartedly to their execution. He studied and practised to perfection the duties of a Dolakasharia Barua. His patriotic desire to expel the Moguls from Assam, and his self-confidence come out very well in his reply to King Chakradhwaj Singha when that monarch was searching for a suitable officer to command the expedition against the imperialists. Lachit said that Assam could produce a general equal to the occasion provided the Swargadeo bestowed on him the dust of his feet. Lachit's representation to the monarch was almost similar to what was said by the great Wazir Sadulla Khan to Emperor Aurangzeb when the latter was complaining of the lack of able officers. "No age is wanting in able men," said the Wazir, "it is the business of wise masters to find them out, win them over, and get work done by means of them, without listening to the calumnies of selfish men against them."<sup>142</sup>

The forcible removal of one's head-dress is a great insult to the wearer. A callous man would swallow such an affront justifying his complacency by pointing to the

142. Irvine, William, *Later Mughals*, II, p. 311.

unpleasant alternative of creating a scene in the august atmosphere of the royal court. Lachit rushed towards the miscreant and compelled him to seek for shelter under the throne. This spirited action of Lachit, though it involved a breach of the decorum of the court, was considered by Chakradhwaj Singha as a tangible proof of his high sense of self-respect which would deter him from doing anything derogatory to himself when he would face vital issues in the ensuing conflicts with the Moguls. This incident has in a way, its parallel in the expression of resentment by Shivaji when he failed to get due honour in the court of Emperor Aurangzeb.

At the outset of the campaign Lachit Barphukan promulgated an order that he would behead every slacker and delinquent. Decapitation or any form of capital punishment which involved the shedding of blood could be carried out only with the sanction of the sovereign; and a Barphukan's sentences of death had therefore to be executed in a bloodless manner, by starving the culprit to death or by drowning him. In face of the tremendous issues at stake, adherence to a mere formality was considered by Lachit Barphukan as a trivial matter, reminding one of the reply of Scipio the Great to Cato's rebuke that the general had been indulging in lavish expenditure. "Scipio answered," says Plutarch, "that he did not require an economist for his quaestor, at a time when he was preparing to wage war on a grand scale, and reminded Cato that he would have to give an account to the Roman people of battles won, not of money expended."<sup>143</sup> Similarly, Lachit Barphukan dispensed

143. Stewart and Long, *Plutarch's Lives*, Life of Marcus Cato, II, p. 101.

with the opinions of precedent-hunters regarding the prerogatives of his position, and tuned his measures to one single objective—victory at any cost; and in his policy he received the concurrence of His Majesty. This bold step illustrates Lachit Barphukan's high sense of values, and his capacity to discriminate between what is trivial and what is important.

Lachit Barphukan's practical sense is revealed in his actions and utterances in connection with the maintenance of the morale of the army, accompanied by simultaneous attempts to demoralise the enemy. The Barphukan's soldiers were nursed from the very beginning in one solitary dream—the victory of the Assamese; and an impression was given to Ram Singha that his defeat was a foregone conclusion. The Barphukan's commanders and envoys were also entrusted with the task of instilling doubts and fears into the hearts of the enemy. Ram Singha, in the conventional language of Rajput and Mogul generals, asked Lachit Barphukan to give him fight for an hour. The Ahom commander-in-chief gave a clever twist to the offer by announcing his readiness to fight till the last drop of his blood. Ram Singha sent a bag of poppy-seeds to Lachit Barphukan pointing out that his soldiers were as numerous as the seeds in the bag. The Barphukan replied by despatching a bamboo casket filled with sands with the laconic message.—“This is the characteristic of our soldiers.” To Ram Singha's proposal to come to a settlement without fighting, the Barphukan replied that the Rajput general must demonstrate his prowess in the battle-field, otherwise he would tarnish his great reputation as a warrior. The Barphukan's messengers convinced Ram Singha that numerous

chieftains had joined the Assamese army; and they embellished this claim by inventing the story of the participation of Rakshasa troops. All this propaganda did not fail to impress Ram Singha of the inevitable disaster awaiting him in Assam. To the Rajput Raja and his officers and men Assam was a *terra incognita*, and so, any bluff seasoned with some grains of possibility was readily swallowed and believed. These bluffs and retorts were always imbued with dignity and firmness, and did not therefore fail to convey the impression that the Ahoms meant business, and that they had not come to win victory in war by mere diplomacy and finesse.

Lachit Barphukan acted with unrelenting sternness and tact in maintaining the morale of his army. His officers and soldiers prayed to the goddess Kamakhya to destroy the invaders. As the goddess, in the deep-rooted beliefs of the Assamese, was cherished as the grantor of all desires, the soldiers at once concluded that the destruction of the enemy was inevitable. Lachit Barphukan's proposal to decapitate a delinquent without making any reference to the monarch steadied all shirkers and waverers, and every one put his best in the fight. The execution of his own maternal uncle as a punishment for slackness convinced the soldiers of the general's determination to carry out his orders without any consideration of personal relationship or friendship. Ram Singha's admiration of the Gauhati fortifications, as reported to the Ahom camp by Hangal-bhanga Laskar, was announced to the whole Assamese soldiery, and they fought with greater confidence in their ultimate victory.

Lachit Barphukan rose to the climax of his leadership in the final naval engagement. He had high fever, and

he led the fight in that state of physical prostration. He hammered two recalcitrant oarsmen and threw them into water, and the report of this incident restored the flagging zeal of his soldiers, and they fought with all their might. His brief utterances at this moment speak of his passionate anxiety for his country's independence, and his own honour. He said to Miri Sandikai Hazarika at Aswakranta,—“Tell your men, I am going to die on this spot, and I never think of abandoning my charge. I have bought a slice of earth on the top of Chila Hill which will provide sufficient accommodation for my remains. If I survive I shall go after all the people have left this place.” He said to Achyutananda Doloi,—“The Moguls are almost reaching Amrajuri. O, astrologer, you have paved the way for your annihilation, brought about my disgrace and destroyed my bread.” He exclaimed from his barge,—“His Majesty has given me the supreme command of the army here, and placed at my disposal vast stores of provisions so that I may fight with the enemy. Should I now desert the fight and revert to the embraces of my wives and children?” He shouted again at the pitch of his voice,—“Let the Moguls capture me alive, and let my people go home in peace!” Nara Hazarika prostrated before the retreating soldiers at Aswakranta, and appealed to them in words, which in their ardour of patriotism have few parallels in the pages of world's history,—“O, my countrymen, if you wish to pour poison into this platter of gold, then please flee.” The immediate result of these appeals was the dash and fury with which the Assamese soldiers rushed upon the hostile fleet. The disgrace of an imminent defeat was soon converted into an imperishable glory of victory.

A leader lacking in farsightedness connives at the corruptions of the men under his charge, hoping thereby to stimulate their interest in their duties. But such connivance leads ultimately to his own downfall, for his underlings cease to be earnest when there is no prospect of easy earnings and of bribes and perquisites. Their cupidity being once excited, they sell out vital secrets to the enemy; and when a crisis comes they help the enemy by their habitual or prearranged perfunctoriness in their duties, if not by open co-operation. Lachit Barphukan nipped corruptibility in the very bud. His messenger Nimcharan was severely punished for having obtained from Ram Singha a present of two wooden birds. The Assamese astrologer Churamani Daivajna was offered a monthly salary of rupees four thousand if he agreed to serve under Ram Singha. The Daivajna wanted to meet Ram Singha just for fun, but he suppressed his curiosity for fear of Lachit Barphukan. The messenger, Bhakata-dah, who tried to entice Churamani Daivajna to the presence of Ram Singha was ordered by Lachit Barphukan to be thrown into water. There cannot be any strength without individual moral purity; and this purity is supremely needed in national emergencies because one unresisted temptation may undo the efforts of an army of diplomats and warriors. Under the inspiration of Lachit Barphukan every soldier, from the highest commander to the ordinary camp-follower, proved his complete immunity from temptations and corruptions. The Barphukan would not even permit his army to plunder the boats of the retreating enemy, because sanction of greed in any form was fraught with the danger of its reappearance in other spheres of war activity. He therefore said,—“Having fought for a



length of time, and being ultimately vanquished Ram Singha is sailing down the river. The fame we have gained thereby is enough for us. Do you think we shall enrich His Majesty by a handful of broken swords and shields seized from the fugitives? It will also cause the loss of a few thousand of our men who have already toiled so hard."<sup>144</sup>

Lachit Barphukan was a born leader of man. His captains and soldiers obeyed his commands to the minutest detail. Even the Prime Minister who commanded the northern division of the army hesitated to disregard the orders of the Barphukan. This spirit of obedience is not of the type generated in the hearts of subjects by a tyrant and an autocrat for the purpose of continuing his unbridled power and authority. This spirit arose from a universal desire to give one's best to the cause of the motherland when it was confronted with a dire crisis. The Barphukan was ever-vigilant and cautious, and he scoured round the whole theatre of operations riding on a pony on the pretext of hunting. He distributed his soldiers in the various camps in an orderly and calculated manner. Overweening confidence in his victory created by the superiority of the Assamese arms, or the trepidation of the Rajput general, or the optimistic findings of astrologers, did not lead to any complacency or inaction in the mind of the Barphukan. Such confidence was salutary as a stimulant, but it could not be a substitute for discipline and organisation.

The injunction of the astrologer, Achyutananda Doloi, not to fire the signal gun even though the Moguls were

144. Goswami, H.C., *Purani Assam Buranji*, p. 150; Ms. Assam Buranji No. 8.

pressing very hard, presented a very delicate and tragical situation. The Barphukan obeyed the signs of the stars to the very letter though he became highly incensed and agitated within, and though in his desperation he uttered threatening words to the astrologer. But the crisis soon passed off, and the Doloi announced the auspicious moment for the attack. The Barphukan never suspected any treachery on the part of Achyutananda. The Doloi was richly rewarded by the king on the termination of the war obviously on the recommendation of the general.

Looking at the incident from a distance of two hundred and seventy-five years we can say that whatever may be the scientific value of astrological calculations, people in those days and some even at the present time do consider them as infallible and unchallengable, and Lachit Barphukan's adherence to them only indicates the time-spirit. But we must point out that by placing an astrological injunction on the same footing as a war-measure in such a tense and critical situation, Lachit Barphukan ran a very serious risk. Astrological calculations in spite of their extensive popularity do not constitute a universal code of action; and a commander should not stake the tremendous issues of war on these calculations of dubious practical value. Even if we accept them as scientific prophecies, there is the risk of miscalculation; and even though the honesty of Achyutananda is unquestionable, other men of his profession may not share his integrity and rectitude. Lachit Barphukan like his contemporaries counted too much upon the verdict of one individual, and that was a mistake, even though his delay in firing the signal gun did not lead to any tragic consequence. The gravity of the mistake can be realised when we

remember that Ram Singha made repeated attempts to tamper with the loyalty of the astrologer.<sup>145</sup>

The mainspring of Lachit Barphukan's patriotism is to be found in his realisation of the serious menace to the independence of his country caused by the presence of the hostile army in the immediate neighbourhood of the Gauhati fortifications. From the top of his fort he reconnoitred the position of the enemy and witnessed the vast array of soldiers in Ram Singha's camp. "Tears rolled down the Barphukan's cheeks," writes an eye-witness, "and he said to himself,—‘It is a tragedy that my country is facing this dire calamity during my command. How will my king be saved? How will my people be saved? How will my posterity be saved?’ Having uttered these words he became restless." Lachit Barphukan knew very well that the final issue of the conflict could never be predicted, however well-fortified and well-prepared he might be.<sup>146</sup>

The king was regarded by the Assamese as the fountain of all energy and inspiration, and Lachit Barphukan was fortunate in having Swargadeo Chakradhwaj Singha as the supreme head of the state. The patriotism

145. In my opinion, Churamani and Achyutananda Doloi are one and the same person. See S. K. Bhuyan's *Deodhai Assam Buranji*, pp. xviii-xx, 150-156; *Assam Buranji S.M.* pp. 122-123; H. C. Goswami's *Darrang Raj Bangsabali* by Suryya-Khari, pp. xi-xii; *Purani Assam Buranji* p. 148; K. N. Bardoloi's *Sandipika*, pp. 17-18, and Appendix IV of the present book dealing with *Assam Buranji* No. 12.

146. This sentiment found expression in the deliberations of King Rudra Singha's war-council, in the speech of the Buragohain, "We must be prepared for both success and reverse, and our measures should be advanced in full recognition of these factors."—S. K. Bhuyan's *Tungkhungia Buranji*, paragraph 65, in both Assamese and English versions.

and self-respect of this monarch have but few parallels in the history of Assam. He had to suffer in the beginning from the shameful legacies of the preceding regime. Being pressed by the Moguls to pay the balance of the war-indemnity fixed in 1663, King Chakradhwaj Singha considered his position to be one of subordination and vassalage; and he shouted out,—“Death is preferable to a life of subordination to the foreigners.” He decided upon immediate resumption of hostilities. His impetuosity was however checked by the timely intervention of the Prime Minister who pointed out the inadequacy of provisions and materials of war. The monarch personally supervised the preparations, planted the smithies inside the palace enclosures, trained the archers with his own hand, and finally satisfied himself that the preparations were complete and up to the mark.

Meanwhile King Chakradhwaj Singha had entered into a correspondence with the neighbouring chiefs in order to obtain their co-operation and support in his plan to resist the Moguls. The king's patriotic intent and self-respect came out in the letters of the period. In June 1664, he wrote to Raja Prana Narayan of Cooch Behar,—“You know for yourself all about the manner in which we have repeatedly dealt heavy blows upon the Moguls. If God has inflicted on us a reverse on this occasion, does it imply that we shall be subjected to discomfiture a second time?” He wrote again in February 1666,—“Because the Moguls have humiliated us once, does it follow that we should make no attempt to throw off this position of subordination to them?”

Chakradhwaj Singha's insight and forethought were best shown in the selection of Lachit Barphukan as the

commander of the new army. A wrong man would have behaved differently, but the king's nominee on this occasion was imbued with the zeal and patriotism of the spirited sovereign, and he succeeded in expelling the Moguls from Gauhati. The monarch expressed his joy at the culmination of his hopes by simply saying,—“It is now that I can eat my morsel of food with ease and pleasure.” King Chakradhwaj Singha's forceful personality and his success in restoring the lost prestige of his country will perpetuate his name in the patriotic annals of Assam.

The third figure of the heroic triumvirate was the Prime Minister Atan Buragohain Rajmantri Dangaria whose probity and foresight served as a check to the impetuous gallantry of King Chakradhwaj Singha and Lachit Barphukan. The Premier was a true statesman, and the convincing logic of his counsels carried great weight with the king and the officers. He was at the same time a great soldier, and he commanded with success the northern wing of the army from his base at Lathia Parvat. The general held frequent consultations with the Premier, and all the major decisions were the result of their joint deliberation. The Buragohain was also a great military engineer, and the fortifications of Gauhati were planned by him, and constructed under his supervision.

The direct association of a man of Atan Buragohain's versatility greatly contributed to the success of the Assamese arms. Raja Ram Singha collected all possible information about the Assamese commanders, and he thus summarised his impression of Atan Buragohain,—“It is really very wonderful that a man can be so intel-

ligent at this tender age. Who will be able to cope with such a minister when he comes to years? Pride should be the heritage of that land where such a counsellor has taken his birth!"

By his originality and penetrating vision the Buragohain could always give a new turn to the proposed line of action when it appeared to him miscalculated and unsound. Chakradhwaj Singha decided upon immediate hostilities with the Moguls; the Premier admitted this necessity "as the high-handed imperiousness of the Moguls has transcended the limits of forbearance." "But", added the Buragohain, "we must provide the army with sufficient quantity of food provisions and war materials, and must hold in stock sufficient reserve to enable us to replenish the stores of the expeditionary army as soon as they become empty." The Premier's admission that "Rice is the most indispensable of all the necessities of life, and if it fails nothing will succeed," reminds us of the famous words of Napoleon Bonaparte,—*"The army marches on its belly."* In the same speech the Premier emphasised the need of "harmony and synchronism" in the activities of the different wings of the army; and "co-ordination" and "unity of command" are stock phrases in the strategy of modern warfare. The proposal for the evacuation of Gauhati was dismissed by the Buragohain with the argument that the terms settled with Ram Singha might not be ratified by the Emperor Aurangzeb, and the Ahom king expressed his concurrence with the Premier's view-point.

But a most significant instance of Atan Buragohain's wisdom and self-confidence is to be found in his counsel to Lachit Barphukan when the latter mourned over the

loss of 10,000 soldiers in the disastrous battle of Alaboi. "Well, general", said the Buragohain, "such a reverse should never shake your confidence in our ultimate victory. Eventualities of this character are normal in a protracted warfare. When you agitate the waters of a pond for catching large fishes the fish-catchers will be pricked by the thorny scales of the smaller fries. You should judge your success by the number of large catches."

The leaders outside the triumvirate were equally earnest in their respective charges. The commanders are mentioned in the description of the disposition of the army, and in one contemporary chronicle their salient features and characteristics are briefly indicated in such words as,— "He was short and small in stature, and was quick in his movements"; "He was fearful to look at"; "He moved about shouting out his orders and instructions"; "He made himself felt wherever he went"; "He did not like to remain still and quiet in any particular place, and wanted to be constantly on his feet"; and, "While moving to and fro he betrayed an attitude of grim defiance of the enemy". These little touches are sufficient to show that the determination to win victory had permeated the hearts of all the commanders. Their replies to Ram Singha's proposals bespoke their intrepidity and patriotic resolve. Buragohain Phukan in reply to Ram Singha's request for an interview said,— "Instead of me I shall show him twenty thousand of my stalwarts who shall pound the Raja's soldiers to a thin paste." The Assamese commander Koa Miriddha's escape from captivity by his dancing feat will remain for ever an illustration of the tactful employment of artistic skill in the operations of war.

The Katakis or envoys were all animated by the same resolution to win victory. Ram Singha failed to elicit any secret from them; on the other hand, the Katakis succeeded in convincing him of the invincibility of the Assamese and the inevitableness of his own defeat. Rani Katak and Kalia Katak thundered forth the bluff,—“The Ahoms cannot but fight at night as they have in their army a force of one hundred thousand Rakshasas or demons who are all man-eaters and night-rovers.” Madhabcharan Katak informed Ram Singha,—“Numerous chieftains of the mountainous regions have become our willing allies in the campaign. They are not amenable to any considerations of right or wrong. Their participation in the war has been directly sanctioned by His Majesty, and they rush furiously against the enemy without waiting for the orders of the general. They are quick and sudden in their attacks, and their movements and actions cannot be presaged.”

Though the statement of Madhabcharan was exaggerated for the purpose of demoralising the enemy yet there is a great deal of truth in it. The chiefs of the neighbouring regions were bound by treaty terms to help the Ahoms in times of war, and some of them owed direct allegiance to the Swargadeo. The heartening words of Raja Prana Narayan of Cooch Behar and Raja Jasamatta Rai of Jayantia evinced their desire to help the Ahoms to crush their common enemy the Moguls. “You should not feel distressed,” wrote Prana Narayan, “at having temporarily lost your dominion since Ramachandra, Suratha and Yudhisthira could not escape similar calamities. But their prestige has not been lowered as they regained their kingdom by dint of their own exertions.”



The Cooch Behar Raja again wrote,— “If we two combine the enemy will not obtain any superior advantage ; on the other hand fortune will offer a fitting opportunity to both of us for retaliation and revenge.” The words of the Jayantia Raja were equally encouraging,—“Jayantia and Gargaon are not separate and divisible. At your discomfiture at the hands of the Moguls I am feeling as if my own country has been harassed and humiliated by the enemy.” There is a ring of great sincerity and helpfulness in the words of Manik Singh Raja of Nartiang,— “Nothing is more disgraceful than the fact that our stalwarts were sitting idle at home when our friends were reported to be in dire distress. This humiliation will be blotted out only on that day when we shall be able to extirpate our foe.” The Jayantia Raja arranged to despatch a powerful contingent to help the Ahoms in their war against the Moguls.

The Raja of the principality named Rani played a distinguished part in the wars of the period. He captured a number of Mogul fugitives at Pandu and sent them up to the Barphukan after having cut off their fingers. He frustrated the attempt made by Ram Singha to enter Gauhati through Darrang. The Rani Raja was amply rewarded by the monarch for his heroic services.

Similar assistance was rendered by other vassal chieftains though the strength of their respective contingents is not known. In the preparations of King Rudra Singha to invade Bengal the Rajas of Darrang, Beltola, Rani, Naduar, Topakuchi, Dimarua, Jayantia and Cachar furnished in all a force of 40,000 soldiers ; similar contingents were also sent by the Rajas of Barduar, Pantan, Bhologaon, Panbari, Kulta, Neli, Gobha, Hozai and

Garakhia though their strength cannot be ascertained at present. Rudra Singha expressed his deep concern for the comfort of his allies. He said that "the loss of his own men would afflict him less," and that "he would feel the greatest regret and shame if the soldiers of his allies, the Princess of Cosaree and Zwointapoor eventually suffered by famine."<sup>147</sup> The participation of the chieftains of the frontier in Assam's conflicts proves beyond doubt that their active co-operation and support could be harnessed in all national emergencies.<sup>148</sup>

The incorruptible leadership and the organised preparations of the Assamese created in the mind of Ram Singha serious misgivings about the success of his mission, and confirmed the fears he had expressed to Guru Teg Bahadur before starting for Eastern India. The fortifications of the Assamese, thought Ram Singha, were impregnable; and the commanders matchless in gallantry and diplomacy. "The enemy", said Ram Singha, "is beyond the reach of our heavy artillery; and there is no opportunity of fighting with arrows and guns. Their ministers, commanders and infantry are all to be admired for having constructed such an impregnable wall of defence." In a fit of desperation Ram Singha asked the Assamese envoys,— "Please explain why a warrior

147. Wade, J.P., *Account of Assam*, pp. 130, 132.

148. Karta-Maharaj Jai Singha, King of Manipur, received military aid from King Rajeswar Singha (1751-69) of Assam to expel the Burmese usurpers from Manipur. During Gaurinath Singha's (1780-95) reign Jai Singha came to Assam on the invitation of its monarch, with a contingent of Manipuri sepoys, and took part in the suppression of the Moamaria revolt. See S. K. Bhuyan's *...* English version, pp. 52-60, 123-128, 231-251; *...* *Raja Ram Singha*, Chapters 4, 5 and 7, published in *Banhi*, vols. XV and XVI.

like myself has not been able to attain any success? What are the peculiar features of Ahom strategy and wherein lies their invincibility?" On the termination of the hostilities Ram Singha explained his discomfiture by pointing out to the unsurpassing leadership of the Barphukan, the intricate character of the fortifications, and the absence of a single loophole for attack. He uttered the following encomiums on the organisation, versatility and courage of the Assamese,— "Glory to the king! Glory to the counsellors! Glory to the commanders! Glory to the country! One single individual leads all the forces! Even I, Ram Singha, being personally on the spot, have not been able to find any loophole and opportunity!" About the all-roundness of an Assamese soldier, the Rajput Raja said,— "Every Assamese soldier is expert in rowing boats, in shooting arrows, in digging trenches, and in wielding guns and cannon. I have not seen such specimens of versatility in any other part of India." Ram Singha's sad experiences in Assam are summarised in his valedictory admission,— "One who comes to fight against Assam should be thrashed on the cheek by scavengers with their broomsticks."

By far the highest compliment paid to the Assamese was the reference to their religious character made by two royal ladies of Amber. "We have heard", wrote Ram Singha's queen and his widowed mother,— "that there is universal *nama-kirtan* in that country, and that cows, Brahmans and Vaisnavas are living there in peace and happiness. You know the consequences of bringing them under sway. By invading that country, Oh, how long could Mir Jumla thrive?" This warning is in

substantial agreement with what Ram Singha himself had told Guru Teg Bahadur,— “The Emperor accordingly sent for me, and ordered me to go and subdue Kamrup. On hearing this I went home and told my mother and queens of the order I had received. They became alarmed, and asked me if I desired an untimely death. They represented that there was none so brave as Mir Jumla, and if he perished what hope was there for me ? ” The princes of Amber were devout Vaisnavas, and the temples erected by them in Brindaban and Gakulpur, and in Benares, Pushkar and Haridwar, are proofs of their devotion to that faith. In the estimation of the Rajput queens, Assam therefore figured as a hallowed land whose peace should not be disturbed, for such an act was sure to recoil upon the peace-breaker, as illustrated by the death of Mir Jumla soon after his departure from the Assam frontier.

The *nama-kirtan*, or religious music and recital, referred to by the royal ladies of Amber as being universally popular in Assam, was the direct offshoot of the Vaisnava revival of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries under the reformers Sankaradeva, Madhabdeva, Damodardeva and their apostles and followers. Vaisnava *Satras* or monasteries were established all over the country; and *Bhawanas* or dramatic performances and musical recitals in glorification of Srikrishna were held in the stately halls of the village *Nam-ghars*, and also in family prayer-halls. Sankardeva and his followers composed hymns and prayers which were sung to the accompaniment of music. From one end of Assam to the other, the villages resounded with *nama-kirtan*, specially on the Vaisnava *tithis* or days associated with the events in the life of Srikrishna, and the anniversaries of the saints. The

three Ahom kings Jayadhwaj Singha, Chakradhwaj Singha, and Udayaditya Singha came under the influence of Vaisnavism, specially through personal contact with the reputed saints Nirranjan Deva and Banamali Gosain. The popularity of *nama-kirtan* has continued till this day; and a visitor to Majuli in Eastern Assam, where we have the largest congregation of Satras, will not fail to breathe the enchantments of a lively Vaisnava atmosphere.

The circumstances which led to the deputation of Raja Ram Singha to Assam, and those which attended him during his stay in this country may lead one to suppose that he was lukewarm in his exertions. An old Assamese chronicle specifically mentions that on receiving the information about his son Krishna Singha's ordeal before Emperor Aurangzeb and the letter of warning from his queen and his mother Ram Singha became dejected and depressed, though he said,— "It is not proper that I should return being vanquished in war."<sup>149</sup> Another chronicle states,— "A report is current to the effect that Ram Singha retired without doing any fighting when he heard the sorrowful news that his son was going to be made a Mussalman by the Padshah."<sup>150</sup> A third chronicle states,— "The reason for which Ram Singha sent repeated demands to the Barphukan was as follows: 'At the time he started on the expedition he took solemn vows before the Padshah; and the Padshah also promised to make him an Umrao and raise his rank if he was successful in his mission; and if he did not succeed, said the Padshah, "I shall take off your head, and I shall kill

149. Bhuyan, S.K., *Assam Buranji*, S.M., p. 121.

150. Bhuyan, S.K., *Kamrupar Buranji*, p. 87.

your children and dependants, and your servants and maids, in a place away from your territories.'"<sup>151</sup>

The circumstances leading to Raja Ram Singha's deputation to Assam, and the reports he received during his stay in this country were depressing and disheartening no doubt; but to attribute to him lukewarmness in his operations against the Assamese would betray complete ignorance of the character of the Rajputs. Lukewarmness and half-heartedness are mild phrases for treachery; and a Rajput, once he has taken a vow, will redeem it at the cost of his life. Fidelity is ingrained in Rajput character, and Ram Singha, sprung from the noble and ancient clan of the Kuchchwas, would be the last man to tarnish the fair name of his family by violating the trust imposed upon him.

Prince Akbar once wrote to his father Aurangzeb,—“Who can doubt that these Rajputs deserve to be praised for their fidelity?” “They are then,” continued Prince Akbar, “worthy of praise, this tribe, as much for their fidelity as for their valour.”<sup>152</sup> The Venetian traveller Manucci who was intimately acquainted with the Rajputs and had served under Jai Singha wrote,—“On the whole, it may be said of these (Rajput) rajahs that they are modest men and religious, keepers of their word, and holding to their mere word as if it were an attested document.”<sup>153</sup> The testimony of James Tod, the historian of the Rajputs, is worth reproduction; he wrote in 1829,—“Ask a Rajpoot which is the greatest of crimes, he will reply,—“*goonchor*”, ‘forgetfulness of favours’.

151. Ms. Assam Buranji No. 14.

152. Manucci, *Storia do Mogor*, tr. Irvine, IV, p. 174.

153. Manucci, *Storia do Mogor*, II, p. 437; IV, p. 438.

This is his most powerful term for ingratitude. Gratitude with him embraces every obligation of life, and is inseparable from *swamdherama*, 'fidelity to his lord'. He who is wanting in these is not deemed fit to live, and is doomed to eternal pains in Pluto's realm hereafter." Tod continues,—“Let us take Rajpoot character from the royal historians themselves from Akbar, Jehangir, Aurangzeb. The most brilliant conquests of these monarchs were by their Rajput allies; though the little regard the latter had for opinion alienated the sympathies of a race, who, when rightly managed, encountered at command the Afghans amidst the snows of Caucasus, or made the furthest Chersonese tributary to the empire. Assam, where the British arms were recently engaged, and for the issue of which such anxiety was manifested in the metropolis of Britain, was conquered by a Rajpoot prince, whose descendant is now an ally of the British Government.”<sup>154</sup>

During their long contact with the Moguls there were many occasions of their discontent with their imperial allies; but no Rajput Raja ever acted treacherously in contravention of their solemn promises and vows. Raja Man Singha of Amber complained of his incessant military preoccupations; “I am despatched to all the wars,” said he on one occasion, “and I do not get time to rest; my soldiers are unduly harassed, and they curse me in consequence.” Still, Man Singha never for a moment slackened in the execution of his imperial duties however

154. Tod's *Rajasthan*, II, pp. 172-174. Tod refers to the submission of Lakshmi Narayan, Raja of Cooch Behar, to the Mogul Emperor, during the Subedarship of Raja Man Singha in Bengal, *Akbarnamah*, Lucknow edition, p. 207, quoted in J.A.S.B., 1872, p. 53.

arduous they might be. Jai Singha discountenanced the proposal of his Rajput veterans to seize the person of Emperor Shah Jahan during the latter's visit to Amber. "It was never done by our family," said Jai Singha, "though the Padshah may do us wrong being misguided, we should never act in a hostile manner as proposed. We have never been unfaithful to the Padshahs of Delhi".<sup>155</sup> Jai Singha met Aurangzeb in the Lakhi Jungle south of the Sutlej. The Padshah had only five horsemen with him, whereas Jai Singha was accompanied by 3,000 well-armed horsemen, all Rajputs. The Raja's officers seeing Aurangzeb in this unprotected state, advised the Raja to kill the Padshah or allow them to do so. "They said", writes Manucci, "his (Jai Singha's) name would be renowned in the world through the release and liberation of Shahjahan. But the Rajah would not listen to such advice, although the occasion was excellent and the accomplishment easy."<sup>156</sup>

Shivaji is said to have attempted to rouse the Hindu susceptibilities of Jai Singha, and sought the Rajput Raja's active support in favour of an anti-Mogul confederacy. But such appeals to Jai Singha's religious sentiments failed to produce any effect on his plan of action.<sup>157</sup> On the other hand Jai Singha exploited the community of religion and race in bringing Shivaji under his grip, and thereby fulfilling his imperial mission. The Rajput Raja despatched an envoy to Shivaji with the following message,—“Aurangzeb is the mighty ruler of

155. Bhuyan, S.K., *Annals of the Delhi Badshahate*, paragraphs 42 and 67, Islamic Culture for April 1933.

156. Manucci, *Storia do Mogor*, I, pp. 320-321.

157. Takakhav and Keluskar, *Shivaji Maharaja*, p. 254.



the earth. You should make friendship with him. The ultimate result of hostility will not be good. I am a Hindu and Raja of Jayapur,—you are a Sisodia of the Udayapur family. You are a scion of a great family, and the defence of our faith is traditional in your family. Your efforts are directed to that end. I am, therefore, favourably disposed towards you. It is my earnest desire to save you and maintain your kingdom. Let me know what is your intention.”<sup>158</sup> Jai Singha wrote to the Emperor about his concentration on the business in hand,—“Not for a moment, in day or night, do I seek any rest or ease from being busy about the task on which I have been sent.”<sup>159</sup>

Suspensions of half-heartedness, collusion or treachery on the part of Raja Ram Singha therefore militate against the very fundamentals of Rajput character. He did all he could to carry out his mission. His defeat in Assam so disconcerted him that he loitered on the frontier for five years, waiting for an opportunity to attack Assam, and thus make up for his discomfiture in 1671. On the other hand, Ram Singha suspected Rashid Khan, his lieutenant, to have entered into a collusion with the Ahoms. The result was Rashid Khan's expulsion from the Mogul camp.

The failure of Ram Singha's campaign in Assam can primarily be attributed to two reasons,—the inadequacy of the Mogul equipment and the defection of Rashid Khan; and the impregnability of the Gauhati fortifications, and the invulnerability and discipline of the Assamese leaders.

158. Deshpande, *Shivaji's escape from Agra*, p. 26.

159. Sarkar, Sir Jadunath, *Shivaji*, p. 124.

Sir Jadunath Sarkar's analysis of the factors leading to Ram Singha's failure in Assam can be reproduced here,—“Ram Singha had only 8,000 troopers round his standards, and his losses were seldom replenished. The Ahoms, being a nation in arms, mustered one hundred thousand when mobilised. Unlike the time of Mir Jumla's invasion, the mastery of the water now belonged to the Ahoms, and the Mughals could do little with their 40 war-vessels on the Brahmaputra.”<sup>160</sup> Sir Jadunath then refers to “the insubordination and disloyalty of Rashid Khan,” who claimed equality of rank with Ram Singha and could not brook to take his orders from the Raja. The Ahoms were believed to have found a friend in Rashid Khan.

There is some disagreement about the number of Ram Singha's soldiers. According to Sir Jadunath Sarkar “The Rajah was accompanied by 4,000 troopers in his own pay, besides 1,500 gentlemen troopers (*ahadis*), and 500 artillerymen of the imperial service. Auxiliaries from Kuch Bihar, numbering 15,000 archers, also joined him but their fighting value was little. The Bengal Viceroy was ordered to reinforce him out of his own contingent.”<sup>161</sup> The *Maasir-i-Alamgiri* mentions 1,500 *ahadis* and 500 artillerymen, but does not refer to the 4,000 troopers in the Rajah's pay, nor to the 15,000 Cooch Behar archers.<sup>162</sup> A contemporary Assamese chronicle gives the figures as follows :—30,000 *sepaïs* given to Ram Singha by the Emperor ; Ram Singha was accompanied by 21 Rajput *Thakurs* including his nephews and other

160. Sarkar, *Aurangzeb*, III, p. 214.

161. Sarkar, *Aurangzeb*, III, p. 213.

162. Blochmann, *Kuch Bihar and Asam*, J.A.S.B., 1872, p. 97.

relatives, and 18,000 Tazi Turuki *sepais* ; and there came with him from Cooch Behar,—Kabisekhar Barua, Sarbeswar Barua, Manmath Barua, and Ghansyam Bakshi, and 15,000 shieldsmen and archers. Another chronicle states that Shaista Khan placed at Ram Singha's disposal a contingent of 2,000 *sepais*.<sup>163</sup>

As Ram Singha's troops were stationed near the Gauhati fortifications, and as Assamese envoys paid frequent visits to the Mogul camp, they certainly obtained correct information about the strength of the hostile force, and the figures quoted by the Assamese chroniclers are based on this information. The figures relating to the troopers in Ram Singha's own pay, the *ahadis* and the artillerymen, represent the allotment originally made by the Emperor. This basic force was augmented by the contingents of the 21 Rajput Thakurs, the contingent contributed by the Bengal Subedar Nawab Shaista Khan, and the Cooch Behar levy. That Ram Singha had a numerous army can be assumed from his own contention that he could have sent a much larger force to confront the Ahom attackers at Alaboi, in addition to the 10,000 the Raja had actually despatched. The figures recorded in the Assamese chronicles cannot therefore be dismissed as entirely untrustworthy.

But whatever may be the actual numbers, one thing is sure that the Assamese army far outnumbered the force under Raja Ram Singha. The nucleus of the Ahom army consisted of the levies trained at Gargaon under the personal supervision of King Chakradhwaj Singha ; then there were the contingents permanently stationed

163. Ms. Assam Buranji, No. 7 ; H. C. Goswami's *Purani Assam Buranji*, p. 138.

at Gauhati and the neighbouring garrisons; and these two units were reinforced by the detachments sent by the vassal chieftains, the Jayantia Raja and other allies. There were besides the vast militia of the adult male population of Assam who could be mobilised at short notice and despatched to the theatre of war. Sir Jadunath Sarkar's statement that the Ahoms could muster one hundred thousand men is very near the truth. It is supported by a news-letter of the court of Aurangzeb dated 10th December 1669, where occurs the following passage,—“The Emperor asked the mace-bearer Nisar Beg, who had returned after conveying an Imperial letter to the Subahdar of Bengal, what the strength of the enemy in Assam was. He replied, that the Rajah (Ram Singha) had said that their foot and horse soldiers totalled about one lakh, out of which the cavalry was very small in number.”<sup>164</sup> The vast number at Lachit Barphukan's disposal enabled him to post one armed soldier at an interval of 13½ feet on the summits and slopes of hills, and of nine feet on the ramparts on the plains connecting the hills. This arrangement was maintained throughout the whole ring of fortifications on both banks of the river Brahmaputra. On account of the deficiency of his army Ram Singha was compelled to fight very carefully as he could not afford to lose his soldiers in indiscriminate and unprofitable attacks. Besides, we are told that his losses were seldom replenished.

Ram Singha is said to have brought with him only forty war-vessels, whereas Mir Jumla had at his dis-

164. *Akhbarat-i-darbar-i-Muala*, Royal Asiatic Society Ms. No. 12-11, quoted by Sir Jadunath Sarkar in *J.B.O.R.S.*, 1915, p. 189.

posal, at the very beginning of his march, 323 war-vessels of all kinds mostly manned by Portuguese, English and Dutch sailors.<sup>165</sup> Ram Singha might have strengthened his fleet in Assam, and there were two famous dockyards in the neighbourhood of Hazo, one at Ramdia and the other at Sualkuchi. On one occasion, during his campaign in Assam, Ram Singha captured a number of Assamese vessels, and despatched a fleet of 500 boats against the enemy. This fleet carried big guns, and their prows have been described as "sixteen-mouthed."<sup>166</sup> In one chronicle Ram Singha is said to have engaged 72 war vessels in the naval battle of Saraighat. In another, it has been said that there was such a heavy congestion of boats on the waters of the Brahmaputra on that occasion that it was difficult for a vessel to make any headway owing to the lack of moving space. The Assamese, during that engagement, constructed a bridge of boats across the Brahmaputra connecting the two banks of the river at Gauhati.<sup>167</sup> The number of Assamese boats at Gauhati of this period cannot be precisely known, though we may surmise that there were any number of vessels as were necessary. There were numerous *Nao-sals* or dockyards in Assam, and the boat-building industry was very highly developed. There were two *khels* or guilds the members of which were engaged solely in boat-building and boat-plying, the *Naosalia khel* and the *Nao-baicha khel*. The creation of

165. Sarkar, *Aurangzeb*, III, p. 179. The statement about 40 war-vessels is obviously based on Golap Chandra Barua's *Ahom Buranji*, p. 204 when it was in Ms. form.

166. Ms. Assam Buranji, No. 12.

167. Bardoloi, K.N., *Sandipika*, pp. 17-18, an extract from an old Assamese chronicle; S. K. Bhuyan's *Assam Buranji S.M.*, p. 123.

a powerful and numerous Assamese navy was made possible by the vast forest resources of the kingdom which supplied excellent timber for boats. "So numerous are the boats, large and small, in this country," wrote Shihabuddin Talish, "that on one occasion the news-writer of Gauhati reported in the month of Ramzan that upto the date of his writing 32,000 *bachari* and *icosah* boats had reached that place or passed it.<sup>168</sup>

Before launching operations against the Moguls, the Ahoms had realised the necessity of making provision for a protracted warfare as we learn from the speech of Atan Buragohain, Prime Minister. The Buragohain took into account the necessity of "boats, sailors and provisions." "We shall have to face dire disaster", said the Premier to King Chakradhwaj Singha and the counsellors, "in the eventual failure of boats and provisions. Unless we have sufficient surplus in the store at present how shall we meet the situation if war has to be prolonged for two or three years? We must take the necessary steps now and arrange for all future contingencies." The Ahoms who possessed such practical foresight as to be able to anticipate all the eventualities of war did not fail to harness the vast resources of the country for the purpose of war preparations.

Nawab Mir Jumla in his invasion of Assam commanded far more extensive resources than Raja Ram Singha, The Nawab had the advantage of the equipments for the expedition against Sultan Shuja which was a matter of urgent importance to Emperor Aurangzeb himself. These equipments were diverted to the invasion of Cooch

168. Sarkar, Sir Jadunath, *Assam and the Ahoms in 1660*, J.B. O.R.S., 1915, p. 192; Blochmann in J.A.S.B., 1872, p. 82.

Behar and Assam, as the pursuit of Shuja who had fled to the wilds of Arracan had to be postponed for some time. As Subedar of Bengal, Mir Jumla could muster all the resources of that province, whereas Ram Singha had to depend upon the courtesy and convenience of Nawab Shaista Khan, Mir Jumla's successor in the governorship of Bengal. Mir Jumla's personal wealth was a matter of gossip all over India. He was reputed to be the richest private man of the Deccan, and the owner of twenty maunds of diamond. He could always draw from his own resources to supplement the expenditure sanctioned by the Emperor.

There was also a great difference between the leadership of Mir Jumla and that of Ram Singha. The former, originally a native of Isphahan, had begun his career as a humble adventurer, and ultimately acquired the power, wealth and grandeur of a ruling prince. Ram Singha had been brought up under the shadow of his distinguished father Mirza Raja Jai Singha, and he had not the necessity to cultivate the qualities of initiative, resourcefulness and boldness of enterprise to the same extent as Mir Jumla. Ram Singha's calibre was mediocre, and his qualities soft, refined and intellectual in contrast to the vigour, push, and inventiveness of Muazzam Khan Khan-khannan Sipah-salar Mir Muhammad Sayid Ardestani.

An attack on Assam from Bengal was always disadvantageous to the invading army, in comparison with the ease and facility with which the Assamese could conduct their war operations. Lachit Barphukan once remarked,—“At Gauhati we can fight as if sitting in our own homes.” The invaders had always to ply their

boats upstream against the strong current of the Brahmaputra. The progress was necessarily slow, and if their fleet was poor the equipments for their war in Assam would of necessity be meagre and insufficient. A large number of men had to be employed for towing the boats up. The land forces had to cut their way through dense forests, tall reeds and boggy morasses. Reinforcements from Bengal similarly took a long time to reach their destination in Assam. The advantageous position of the occupants of the upper rapids of the Brahmaputra was realised by the Government of the East India Company in 1824 when they despatched an army to attack the Burmese at Gauhati, mainly out of fear that the latter could at any time sail down the river and enter into Bengal eluding the vigilance of the Company's flotilla at Goalpara.<sup>169</sup> The difficulties experienced by the Moguls during Mir Jumla's invasion have been very well summarised by Charles Stewart who drew his materials from contemporary Persian sources. "As Meer Joomla was resolved not to quit sight of his fleet", wrote Charles Stewart, "on which were embarked his stores and depot of provisions, he regained the banks of the Burhampooter; and having crossed that river near Rangamutty, at the expense of great labour and much delay, he formed a road which enabled him to proceed by short stages. During this march, as the imperial army was obliged to drag the boats against strong current, and the troops were necessitated to cross rivers and clamber over precipices, it frequently happend that their day's journey did not exceed one or two miles,

169. David Scott to Col. Macmorine, February 6, 1824, Bengal Secret and Political Consultations, 13th February 1824, No. 16. India Office Records.



during which time, although not opposed by the enemy in front, they were often annoyed on their flanks by small parties of Assamese firing on them from behind trees, or whatever the nature of the ground permitted them to approach unseen."<sup>170</sup> Ram Singha's experiences in the "most wearisome march" could not be very much different from those of his predecessor.

The rigours of the Assam climate told heavily upon the health of the invading forces; and pestilences and diseases caused severe sufferings and losses in their ranks which were being already depleted by the guerilla attacks of the Assamese. The character of the Assamese was an unknown factor to the Moguls, and the latter could not anticipate the tactics of the enemy. Unexpected rains and floods, its hills and swamps and thick jungles added to the discomfiture of the invaders. These difficulties are described in vivid touches by the personal eye-witness Shihabuddin Talish, and a few passages are reproduced from his chronicle of Mir Jumla's expedition :

"Assam is a wild and dreadful country abounding in danger."

"Its roads are frightful like the path  
leading to the nook of Death;  
Fatal to life is its expanse  
like the unpeopled city of Destruction.  
Its forests are full of violence  
like the hearts of the ignorant,  
Its rivers are beyond limit and estimate  
like the minds of the wise."

170. Stewart's *History of Bengal*, p. 320.

"At a distance from the river, the climate agrees with the natives, while it is rank poison to foreigners. It rains for eight months; and even the four months of winter are not free from rain. In the cold weather the diseases of cold and moisture attend to foreigners with greater intensity than natives, while in summer excessive secretion of bile grasps foreigners more violently than natives."

"The air and water of the hills are like the destructive Simoom and deadly poison to natives and strangers alike. Its plains, by reason of their being girt round by hills, tend to breed melancholy and fear."

"In all the past ages no [foreign] king could lay the hand of conquest on the skirt of this country, and no foreigner could tread it with the foot of invasion. Narrow are the gates by which outsiders can enter or issue from this country, and lame are the feet on which its natives can go to other countries."

"In short, every army that entered the limits of this country, made its exit from the realm of life; every caravan that set foot on this land, deposited its baggage of residence in the halting-place of Death."

"And as no one who entered this country, like visitors to the realm of Death, ever returned, and the manners of its natives were never made known to any [outsider], the people of Hindustan used to call the inhabitants of Assam sorcerers and magicians, and consider them as standing outside the human species, and enter the name of this country in [their] spells and counter-spells. They say that whosoever visits this country is overcome by charms and never comes out of it."<sup>171</sup>

171. These seven passages are taken from Sir Jadunath Sarkar's translation of *Fathiyah-i-Ibriyah* in J.B.O.R.S., 1915, pp. 183-9.

"If a man dared to leave the camp, he was certain to be shot by the Assamese. A similar case never happened in the history of Dihli. Here were 12,000 horse and numerous infantry locked in for six months, prevented by the rains from continuing operations, and yet scarcely attacked by the enemies that surrounded them. Nor did during this time provisions arrive. The Amirs turned their eyes longingly to Dihli, and the soldiers yearned for their wives and children."

"In the beginning of the war, Dilir Khan's detachment consisted of nearly 1,500 horse; and at the end of the rains and his expedition to Namrup, he only mustered between 4 and 500."<sup>172</sup>

Similar impressions of the conditions in Assam will surely be found in the letters written by Ram Singha from Assam or by any of his camp-followers, which, unfortunately, have not yet seen the light of day.<sup>173</sup>

To the difficulties arising from the peculiar climate of Assam should be added those springing from the vigilance and preparedness of the Assamese, their incorruptibility, and their determined efforts to resist the enemy. The ring of fortifications round Gauhati offered an impenetrable wall of defence to the Assamese. Soldiers were posted on the summits and slopes of hills, and on the earthen ramparts bridging the mountains. The whole length of the fortifications was divided into

172. *Fathiyah-i-Ibriyah*, J.A.S.B., 1872, pp. 88-91.

173. In the archives of the Jaipur State there are records relating to "the Assamese campaign of 1669 and 1671", *vide* Prof. Sri Ram Sharma's *Bibliography of Mughal India*, pp. 22-26; and Memorandum on Ram Singha received from Mr. M. M. Kham-batha, Registrar of the Mahakma Khas, Jaipur.

a number of *palis* or units of command ; and each *pali* was commanded by an officer with a contingent of troops and a number of commando soldiers. Every movement of the enemy was closely watched, and checked where necessary. The breaches made here and there were promptly repaired. In the language of the Assamese the fortifications of Gauhati were known as being "constructed by Biswakarma", the Hindu Vulcan, the god of engineering, and as being "impenetrable even to the gods." A chronicle says,—“Under the orders of Chakradhwaj Singha Maharaja, fortifications were erected as if they had been made by Biswakarma. The Barphukan remained there inviolate and firm.”<sup>174</sup>

Ram Singha admitted the difficulties of attacking the Assamese, and referred constantly to their fortifications "having the shape of *Yantras*." Once he said to Rashid Khan,—“Forts have been constructed by the Ahoms on tops of hills, and the outlying plains are also too narrow for the purpose of an open engagement. It is for this reason that the Assamese had proved invincible in their wars against foreigners. The fortifications are circular in shape, and to each fort there are three passages. The enemy is beyond the reach of our heavy artillery ; and there is no opportunity of fighting with arrows and guns. Their ministers, commanders and infantry are all to be admired for having constructed such an impregnable wall of defence.” To Emperor Aurangzeb's accusation of Ram Singha for his slackness the Raja replied,—“I have not refrained from fighting, but it has proved useless. As there are no fields, fighting by spears, shields and guns is an impossible affair. The Assamese have

erected an impenetrable wall of defence on both the banks. There is the possibility of one naval fight only." As we know it was in a naval engagement that Ram Singha's forces were put to a rout which brought the conflicts to an end. Before commencing his retreat the Raja visited the Madhava temple at Hazo and told the Brahmans there about the extraordinary heroism of Lachit Barphukan, the *Yantra*-like shape of the fortifications which did not offer him any opportunity for attack.

The open plan in front of Alaboi Hill was the only place where the Rajput cavalry found a fitting opportunity for displaying their mettle. Ten thousand Assamese soldiers were slain in the Alaboi battle during the course of one single day; and Ram Singha gloated over this solitary triumph, saying,—“Look at the rashness of the Assamese, they venture to fight on the plains with Amber horsemen!” The Ahoms rigorously avoided meeting the enemy in open fields, as their foot-soldiers were terribly shy of cavalry charges, as we know from Shihabuddin Talish,—“The Assamese are greatly frightened by horses, and if they catch one they hamstring it. If a single trooper charges a hundred well-armed Assamese, they all throw their arms down and run away, and if they cannot flee they put their hands up to be chained [as prisoners]. But if one of them encounters ten Mussalman infantry men, he fearlessly tries to slay them and succeeds in defeating them.”<sup>175</sup> After Alaboi, Ram Singha did not get a second opportunity for engaging his troopers. Having spotted some breaches at Andharubali he despatched a contingent of cavalry in boats, but before they could reach their objective they were dispersed by the Assamese, the attack being con-

175. J.B.O.R.S., 1915, p. 191.

ducted personally by Lachit Barphukan. The Assamese knew very well that once the cavalry got into the Gauhati plain the task of withstanding their onslaught would not be an easy one.

Ram Singha suffered from the absence of a capable and trustworthy lieutenant. Rashid Khan, his second-in-command, proved refractory and unreliable, and he was even suspected of entering into a collusion with the Assamese. The course of events would have taken a different turn if a consummate leader like Dilir Khan Daudzai had accompanied Ram Singha to Assam. It was through Dilir Khan's intrepidity that Mir Jumla was able to occupy the "sky-high fort" of Shamlagarha, or Simalugarh fort, "the beseiging of which was beyond the masters of lofty designs." The *Maasir-ul-Umara* describes Dilir Khan to be "an associate of victory" in every place during his command of Mir Jumla's vanguard in the Assam expedition. "By the favour of time and the might of his star", it continues, "from the beginning to the end of his life, he was at the top of fortune. He never received any buffet from fate, nor suffered any disgrace or contempt."<sup>176</sup> During Jai Singha's campaign against Shivaji, "Dilir Khan sat down before Purandar like grim death, his men doing in a day what could not be achieved elsewhere in a month."<sup>177</sup> Dilir Khan should have been a substitute for Rashid Khan in Ram Singha's Assam expedition, but the Afghan veteran was busy at that time fighting against Deogarh and Bijapur, and eluding the vigilant pursuit of Sultan Muazzam and Jaswant Singh.

176. *Maasir-ul-Umara*, tr. Beveridge and Baini Prashad, I, pp. 495-505, life-sketch of Dilir Khan Daudzai.

177. Sarkar, *Shivaji*, p. 144.

Having failed to achieve his object by the application of arms, Ram Singha took recourse to the stereotyped diplomatic devices of *sama* or conciliation, *dana* or gifts, and *bheda* or dissension, and at times he adopted the two methods—war and diplomacy—when he deemed such combination expedient and politic. These tactics he had learnt to perfection in the school of Mirza Raja Jai Singha's strategy.

During the progress of the campaign against Shivaji, Jai Singha sent messengers to various Deccani chieftains to incite them to take up arms against the Mahratta leader; and several zemindars and chiefs deputed agents to Jai Singha with offers of joining the Mogul side. The Raja's spies approached every one who entertained a grudge against Shivaji, or was jealous of the growing power of the Bhonslas; and several chiefs, including Fazl Khan, the son of Afzal Khan, accepted commands under Jai Singha. He also attempted to tamper with the loyalty of Shivaji's officers by the offer of money and promises of high rank under the Moguls; and several captains of Shivaji and of his vassal chiefs went over to the camp of Jai Singha.<sup>178</sup> A Mahratta historian writes.—“We have even evidence that he [Jai Singha] tried to create defection in the rank of Shivaji's followers. That he resorted to ‘bheda’ is certain from his letter to Aurangzeb in which he tells him that he had invited Chandrarao More's relative and the son of Afzal Khan and the Mahomedan servants of Shivaji who were manufacturing guns for him as also Shivaji's comrades, on promises of mansab.”<sup>179</sup> These diplomatic measures were

178. Sarkar, *Shivaji*, p. 124.

179. Vaidya, *Shivaji*, p. 178.

employed as ancillary to the armed conflicts ; and Shivaji was finally brought to submission by the pressure of superior arms, and solemn assurances of friendship and reconciliation with the Emperor.

A few years later, in Assam, Jai Singha's son started by asking Lachit Barphukan to restore the limits fixed by Momai-tamuli Barbarua thereby appealing to the filial instincts of the Assamese general to abide by the stipulations of his deceased father. The Barphukan's acceptance of this demand, observed Ram Singha, would be an everlasting pillar of gold and silver, and would ensure the continuance of his fame till eternity. The Assamese commanders, in a body, pooh-poohed the idea and characterised the proposal as "a highway made of ashes." They held that Lachit Barphukan's agreement was ineffective as it must receive the concurrence of the Ahom monarch ; neither had Ram Singha's proposal any value as it required the consent of Emperor Aurangzeb. The Assamese politely rebuked Ram Singha for his efforts to settle his demands by peaceful negotiations thereby avoiding the application of force. They pointed out that Ram Singha had been despatched to Assam to justify his reputation as a bold warrior, and that he would be greatly discredited if he returned from Assam without achieving any victory.

Ram Singha made repeated offers of money to the Barphukan and his officers. In the camp of Lachit Barphukan, who would not permit his messenger to receive even a pair of wooden birds from the enemy, the acceptance of gifts was a remote contingency. The Assamese envoy Bhakatdah tried to entice the astrologer ; having heard this the Barphukan proposed to throw him into water as a punishment for such an



attempt. He would not connive at his men's touching even the fringe of corruption as such connivance was fatal to their firmness and integrity.

Being himself a devout Vaisnava, and knowing that his adversaries were dominated by Hindu sentiments, Ram Singha couched his proposals in a language which was redolent of Hindu beliefs. He said once to the Assamese envoys,—“If I demand more than this, this sword in my hand which is like Parameswari will cause my annihilation; and this pearl-chain on my neck, a veritable Lakshmi will desert me for good, and my fourteen generations will go to hell. If my words are not believed let us proceed to the temple of Madhab Gosain on the bank of the Lauhitva where I am prepared to solemnly affirm my oaths. If my brother the Barphukan agrees to this proposal he will be given whatever he shall desire.” He said again,—“I am sending some money with you for the Phukans and the Rajkhowas. They should exercise their influence in procuring the evacuation of Gauhati. I am prepared to do whatever I am asked to do.” The temptations offered by the Rajput general fell on deaf ears, and the Assamese commanders remained adamant and firm in their determination to crush the invaders.

Ram Singha also tried to create dissension in the Assamese camp by causing distrust in the leadership of Lachit Barphukan. This was done by shooting arrows into the camps of the several commanders. A bamboo tube with a slip of paper containing a message was generally fastened to the arrow. Ram Singha once shot an arrow-message into the camp of Miri Sandikai Phukan with whom Lachit Barphukan had some misunderstanding.

ing. The message which was addressed to the Barphukan ran as follows,—“Well, Nabab, you signed an agreement yesterday promising to desist from war, to enable us to have a clear passage [to Gauhati], for which you accepted a consideration of one lakh of rupees. To-day you have taken the field instead of allowing us the passage. Would you please send a reply stating the reasons?” Miri Sandikai Phukan despatched the message at once to the Ahom king, with obvious embellishments and additional insinuations. The Swargadeo’s mind became poisoned by the letter even though he did not hear the comment and explanation of the Barphukan and his colleagues. Ghorakowanr who had been superseded in the Barphukanship by Lachit, and who had been acting as an intermediary between the king and the Gauhati commanders, must have added fuel to the fire. As a result the monarch despatched men under Ghorakowanr, with saws and axes, to kill Lachit Barphukan in his camp at Gauhati. One Manichandra Barua also accompanied Ghorakowanr to Gauhati. Atan Buragohain despatched a letter to the Swargadeo explaining the real situation, wherein he cited precedents from history and from political usages. The Premier’s forceful representation of the real facts convinced the monarch of the innocence of Lachit Barphukan.<sup>180</sup> A tragedy of the first magnitude was thus averted through the intervention of Atan Buragohain, and Ram Singha’s hand in the affair became patent to all, who thenceforward refused to attach any importance to the insinuations of the arrow-messages shot from the enemy’s lines. The Rajput general’s efforts to create strifes and

180. Barua, Keshab Kanta, *Baniya-Kakati* Bangsabali-sar, p. 51.

feuds in the Ahom camp were thus frustrated at the very inception.

Similar arrow-messages were subsequently shot into the camps of Atan Buragohain and Lachit Barphukan. The first one alleged that the Barphukan had entered into friendly terms with Ram Singha and had abandoned the fight in consequence. The second message made the same allegation against the Buragohain. The two Ahom leaders realised the hostile hand in the attempt to create dissension in their camp, and did not pay any attention to the messages. On the other hand they asked their captains and soldiers to be more circumspect than before.<sup>181</sup>

In his desperation, Ram Singha insisted upon having a duel with the king of Assam. He also expressed a desire to have an interview with the Ahom commander Buragohain Phukan. The first request was rejected by the monarch on the ground that "Ram Singha is a mere servant, and he has no umbrella over his head." Buragohain Phukan sent a bold and threatening reply,—“Instead of me, I shall show him twenty thousand of my stalwarts who shall pound the Raja's soldiers to a thin paste.” Taunts and rebuffs of this nature constituted the Assamese response to Ram Singha's overtures for a peaceful settlement. Ram Singha thus failed miserably in obtaining any effective advantage over the Assamese, whether in armed conflicts, or in diplomacy; and he gave vent to his bitter experiences in Assam by saying,—“Even I, Ram Singha, being personally on the spot, have not been able to find any loophole and opportunity.”

But the history of the world hardly furnishes an example of war without attendant difficulties ; and no invading force, except perhaps the ' blitzes ' of Adolf Hitler, could walk into another territory without confronting opposition, obstacles and barriers, offered by nature as well as by men. The leadership of a general is measured by his capacity to devise effective means to overcome odds and handicaps. Ram Singha's admission that he did not find any loophole and opportunity is a lamentable proof of his lack of dash, pluck, and inventiveness, whatever may be the contributory factors. On the other hand, the fact of his obtaining no superior advantage over the Assamese is an evidence of their efficient organisation and leadership.

The fortifications of Gauhati and the climatic and other natural conditions of Assam provided the local army an impenetrable shield of protection. But the cohesion and integrity of the Assamese, their fierce determination to win victory, their farsightedness, their organisation and their discipline, and the matchless leadership of their commanders, proved a more insurmountable barrier, which, neither the wealth of Delhi and Amber, nor the strategy of the Rajputs could disrupt and overthrow. Their minds constituted a solid wall of granite, and to continue the metaphor, "every cannon-ball that reached the bastion and wall, on account of the strength of the fort, only made a little dust of it rise up, and no sign appeared of the walls being broken or of the battlements falling."<sup>182</sup>

182. *Maasir-ul-Umara*, tr. Beveridge and Bains Prashad, I, p. 499, description of the attack on Simalugarh fort.

This invincible spirit was the result of the example of the leaders. The king was determined to win victory, and his captains were animated by the same resolution. The monarch exercised control over the general, and spurred him to speedy and decisive actions; and the Premier feared the general, though he checked the latter's impetuosity when such checking was imperative. There was no acrimony or hidden discontent in the relations of these supreme leaders; they acted with one single undivided purpose,—the victory of the Assamese arms; and in pursuing this common objective they obliterated all traces of their ego. They transmitted their spirit to the subordinate commanders, and the latter to their soldiers and camp-followers. The whole Assamese nation, from the king down to the meanest peasant, acted like one man. That was a sight for the gods to see; and to the Assamese, it is a perennial source of inspiration in all future measures of rehabilitation and progress.

During the conflicts of the period the Assamese showed a wonderful capacity for prompt and effective recuperation. Mir Jumla's invasion caused serious disruption, and King Jayadhwaj Singha had to sue for peace and accept very humiliating terms, including the permanent deprivation of his only child and daughter. The war-indemnity had to be promptly delivered, and the inhabitants who had left their homes had to be brought back and resettled in their old pursuits and professions. Besides, the national honour had to be retrieved, the confidence of the people in the government and in themselves restored, and their defeatist mentality converted into victory-mindedness. Jayadhwaj Singha took up the task of rehabilitation with

the same forethought and energy which he had shown in recovering Kamrup from the Moguls and carrying his victorious arms to the neighbourhood of Dacca. His letter to the Rajas of Cooch Behar, Jayantia and Nartiang bear evidence of his determination to cross swords with the Moguls once again. "Even when the sun is once eclipsed", he wrote to the Koch Raja Prana Narayan "does it not make its appearance again?" The few months that he survived the Treaty of Ghilajhari-ghat were spent in tears and regrets for having reduced his country to Mogul vassalage, and his death-bed injunction reflects the agony of his heart,—“It should be your earnest endeavour to extract from the nation's bosom the spear of humiliation fixed upon it by our enemy the Moguls.”

His successor Chakradhwaj Singha would not allow himself to be demoralised into inaction by the sad plight of his country. He regarded the present situation to be a solitary deviation from Assam's uninterrupted career of victory over foreigners. This self-confidence was translated into vigorous practical measures for the expulsion of the Moguls from Gauhati and Kamrup. His letters to his allies breathe this energy of mind and grim determination to win victory. He wrote to Prana Narayan,—“But you know for yourself all about the manner in which we have repeatedly dealt heavy blows upon the Moguls. If God has inflicted on us a reverse on this single occasion, does it imply that we shall be subjected to discomfiture again?” After making some headway in his preparations he wrote again to Prana Narayan,—“Because the Moguls have humiliated us once, does it follow that we should make no attempt to throw off this position of subordination to them?” He

even drew his inspiration from the fact that "Shewa [Shivaji] having defeated the Moguls has pushed them back to a distance of twenty days' march." To both Jayadhwaj Singha and Chakradhwaj Singha the humiliating results of Mir Jumla's invasion were a prelude to more vigorous action, greater organisation, and more systematic marshalling of the country's resources consisting not only of men and materials but also of the incipient patriotism and the dormant potentiality of the nation.

The Assamese knew very well that their country abounds in extensive resources of men and provisions, and they also realised the necessity of fusing these resources for the achievement of one common object. This fusion, they rightly believed, can be effected only by the untiring exertions of selfless and patriotic leaders. In the reign of Jayadhwaj Singha, the reverses suffered by the Assamese at the hands of Mir Jumla were attributed by them to the absence of leaders of the requisite mettle, though there was no shortage of war provisions. The recognition of the vital necessity of leaders came to the forefront when King Rudra Singha contemplated the invasion of Mogul India, as we learn from the speech of the Kuoigayan Buragohain delivered at a meeting of that monarch's war-council,—“The ancestors of our King had, by virtue of their prowess and courage, crossed the boundaries of Rangamati, and washed their swords at the Karatoya-Ganga. They found it inconvenient to fix the boundaries of Assam at the Karatoya, and so they made the river Manaha the western limit of Assam, and established a garrison at Gauhati. In the reign of Jayadhwaj Singha there was an abundance of provisions and men, and still he acquired the title of *Bhagania*

*Raja or the Deserting King.* Arms and ammunitions, materials and supplies are torpid and impotent; the servants and subordinates of the king are symbols of life and animation; they alone can infuse into the immobile war-provisions a dynamic force. Still, we should measure the strength of our own equipments as well as those of the enemy. We must be prepared for both success and reverse, and our measures should be advanced in full recognition of these factors."<sup>183</sup> Whenever Assam possessed these factors, and whenever it had the good fortune of producing the right type of leaders, its success and rehabilitation became a matter of easy achievement. Similarly, its decline became accelerated when internal feuds and strifes incapacitated the nobles and chiefs to act in harmony and concord, and to utilise the vast resources of the country for the common good of the people.

The minds of the masses are impressionable and elastic, and they can be fashioned to serve the purpose of the leaders. The inherent martial spirit of the Assamese has been admitted by foreign observers, and we may here reproduce the words of Mir Jumla's chronicler Shihabuddin Talish,—“A very small number of their [Assamese] soldiers often checkmate thousands in battle....They mostly engage in battles and night-attacks in the night of Tuesday, which they consider an auspicious time.” Shihabuddin reproduces in his narrative a *qasida* written by “that master of eloquence, Mulla Darvish of Herat, who was our kind companion and associate during this expedition.”<sup>184</sup> The Herati poet

183. Bhuyan, S. K., *Tungkhungiya Buranji*, English version, O.U.P., pp. 28-29.

184. J.B.O.R.S., 1915, p. 193.



bears testimony to the courage of the Assamese when he says,—

“The Rajah of Assam brought to the field an army  
Whose large number became a cage on earth;  
[They were] tumult-raising and sudden [in attack]  
like the eyes of the fair sex,  
Hurling arrows and [other] missiles, and  
Making a [firm] stand in the battle-field.  
Their bodies full of life, they robbed lives on plain  
and hill.  
All of them were terrific like the demon Ifrit on  
the river.  
If one of them made a charge on the battle-field,  
Their bodies would be severed from their heads, and  
their heads from their bodies [before they left it].  
They seem to be Ahrimans come out of hell,  
Or some beast that has escaped the chains of  
captivity.”

During the Burmese invasion of Assam, the redoubtable Avanesse general Kiamingi Bargohain did not fail to recognise the fighting capacity of the Assamese soldier. The reverses suffered by the Assamese were attributed by Kiamingi to the absence of a proper leader. After the defeat of the Assamese forces at the battle of Phulpanichinga in February 1819, Kiamingi said to his Assamese confidant Momai Barua,—“You have plenty of warriors in your land, but we have been able to defeat you because you have no (able) minister (or efficient leader).”<sup>185</sup> Even now, whispers are audible about the non-utilisation of the vast resources of Assam, both in men and raw materials, owing to the paucity of leaders.

185. Bhuyan, S.K., *Asamar Padya-Buranji*, p. 261.

But, what are the qualities of a good leader?—I shall simply reproduce the analysis of George D. Halsey who has made a special study of the subject. According to Halsey, the attributes of leadership are: “Integrity, sincerity, honesty; fairness, impartiality; courage, self-confidence, decisiveness, initiative; tact, ability to make and keep friends; enthusiasm, ability to arouse enthusiasm in others; curiosity, observation, open-mindedness; judgment; thoroughness; resourcefulness, ingenuity, originality; co-ordination, strategy, execution.”<sup>186</sup>

It is only with the appearance of the much-needed leaders in the field of action in Assam that we may witness the fulfilment of the dream which we had pictured some years ago,—

“No place-name has been subject to such variation in meaning and etymology as the term by which we designate our province. But the consensus of opinion is in favour of interpreting *Assam* or *Asama* as being equivalent to ‘uneven’ or ‘peerless.’ For uneven it is, undoubtedly, and its peerlessness has sprung from the unique possibilities emanating from the god-given combination of mountains and valleys. The vigour of our primitive tribes has served as a complement to the subtlety of the intellectual Aryans. The dwindling virility of the ease-loving plainsfolk has been reinforced by the elemental energy of the hillmen, whose muscles and sinews are at our eternal command whenever we project any enterprise of valour. The proper marshalling of these two elements of the population, and the

186. Halsey, George D., *How to become a Leader*, Taraporevala, Bombay, pp. 64-66.

rapprochement necessitated by their proximity and contact have permeated the culture, civilisation, religion and society of the people of our province.

"The natural resources of our province, its numerous rivers and streams, its petroleum and coal mines, its lime quarries, its virgin forests, combined with the richness and variety of its soil, constitute an economic asset of the highest importance. These different factors available for building up the wealth of the province, if properly explored and utilised, will earn for it the epithet of the Rising Sun in the East, speaking in terms of the Indian continent ; and the old-time labels (and libels too) 'Benighted', 'Cinderella', and "Sleepy Hollow" will only accentuate the rapidness with which we shall climb the Everest of Glory."<sup>187</sup>

We want leaders who will rise to the heights of disinterestedness in their services for the uplift of their motherland ; who will, by example and precept, infuse into the hearts of their countrymen and neighbours those noble sentiments which animated the actions of their patriotic ancestors, as revealed in the utterances and observations recorded and preserved in their national histories for the emulation and inspiration of all future ages.<sup>188</sup>

These sentiments did not belong to the domain of political catch-phrases which decorate the periods of demagogues. They were founded on the bed-rock of

187. Bhuyan, S. K., Bulletin of the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Assam, No. II, 1934, pp. 1-2.

188. Some of these utterances and observations are inserted in Appendix I to this book. For the pre-Lachit and post-Lachit utterances see S. K. Bhuyan's Introduction to *Assam Buranji*, S.M., pp. liii-lxxxI, the section entitled *Maxims and Observations*.

realities, and were translated into planned and effective action to tide over a national crisis of the highest magnitude. That deliberation and practice, design and execution, and reflection and movement went hand in hand is revealed in the glowing tributes paid to the Assamese by their adversaries, Raja Ram Singha of Amber and his learned associate Panditrai:—

“Forts have been constructed by the Ahoms on the tops of hills, and the outlying plains are also too narrow for the purpose of an open engagement. It is for this reason that the Assamese had proved invincible in their wars against foreigners.”—*Raja Ram Singha to Rashid Khan.*

“Their ministers, commanders and infantry are all to be admired for having constructed such an impregnable wall of defence.”—*Raja Ram Singha to Rashid Khan.*

“The Barpatra Gohain, the Bargohain and the Barphukan have all impressed me as wonderfully capable commanders presenting a rare combination of beauty, accomplishment, valour and wisdom.”—*Raja Ram Singha's envoy Panditrai.*

“As to the Buragohain he is young in years, fair and handsome in features, sober and deep in intelligence, dexterous in all matters, and he rivals all others in the soundness of his counsel. The Buragohain is also an arch-diplomat.”—*Panditrai to Raja Ram Singha.*

Speaking of Atan Buragohain,—“It is really wonderful that a man can be so intelligent at this tender age. Who will be able to cope with such a minister when he comes to years? Pride should be the heritage of that land where such a counsellor has taken his birth.”—*Raja Ram Singha.*

“Every Assamese soldier is expert in rowing boats, in shooting arrows, in digging trenches, and in wielding guns and cannon. I have not seen such specimens of versatility in any other part of India.”—*Raja Ram Singha, after the battle of Saraighat.*

“Glory to the king ! Glory to the counsellors ! Glory to the commanders ! Glory to the country ! One single individual leads all the forces ! Even I, Ram Singha, being personally on the spot, have not been able to find any loophole and opportunity !”—*Raja Ram Singha.*

## APPENDIX I

### NOTABLE UTTERANCES AND OBSERVATIONS

Significant utterances and speeches of the leading personages of history are recorded, in the course of the narratives and in varying degrees of length, in the contemporary Assamese chronicles. Besides vivifying the events described, they throw light on the political ideology and war-strategy of the Assamese people. Some such observations and remarks of Assamese kings and commanders, and of their royal allies of Cooch Behar, Jayantia and Nartiang, are reproduced below in chronological order. They will be found in the proper place in the text of the present history of Lachit Barphukan, and in the diplomatic epistles inserted in Appendix III. By a careful study of these extracts it will be possible to form a connected idea of the Assam-Mogul relations of the period 1663 to 1671 :—

1. "If a few hairs of the head are grey, it behoves one to pluck them out; but when the whole head is grey, who ever thinks of that painful operation?"—*Rajasahur Barphukan to King Jayadhwaj Singha on his plan to punish delinquents and deserters.*

2. "Jayantia and Gargaon are not separate and divisible. At your discomfiture at the hands of the Moguls I am feeling as if my own country has been harassed and humiliated by the enemy. What has been done cannot be undone; henceforward we should attempt to strengthen our bonds of friendship. The Moguls have simply invaded your country; they have not been able to hold it under their domination permanently. The land, the people are all intact, as well as your august self. Measures should now be concerted to organise more effective co-operation between ourselves so that we may wreak vengeance upon the Moguls. Then only we shall be happy, and the pangs of our heart

disappear.”—*Raja Jasomatta Rai of Jayantia to King Jayadhwaj Singha.*

3. “Why two? We would not have been sorry even if we had lost ten or twenty thousand men for your sake. We are aggrieved that we could not render you any assistance with our men.”—*Raja Manik Singha of Nurtiang to Jayadhwaj Singha.*

4. “Distance becomes proximity if the hearts of the two parties are pure and sincere. Gargaon and Jayantia are not two. What pains me most is the fact that I was living in peace and comfort when your country was overrun by the Moguls, and that I had no opportunity to order ten or twenty thousand of my stalwarts to run to your aid in your crisis.”—*Raja Manik Singha of Nurtiang to Jayadhwaj Singha.*

5. “You should not feel distressed at having temporarily lost your dominion since Ramachandra, Suratha and Yudhisthira could not escape similar calamities. But their prestige has not been affected as they regained their kingdoms by dint of their exertions.”—*Raja Prana Narayan of Cooch Behar to Jayadhwaj Singha.*

6. “You have asked me to exert myself to regain the independence of my kingdom, which is a very sound and inspiring advice. Even when the sun is once eclipsed, does it not make its appearance again?”—*King Jayadhwaj Singha to Raja Prana Narayan.*

7. “We are making preparations according to our might, and I hope you are also doing the same. When fire and wind act in unison they take no time in burning the trees and grasses. So we can also defeat and destroy our enemy if we establish an effective alliance between us two.”—*King Jayadhwaj Singha to Raja Prana Narayan.*

8. “It should be your earnest endeavour to extract from our nation’s bosom the spear of humiliation fixed upon it by our enemy the Moguls.”—*Jayadhwaj Singha’s death-bed injunction.*

9. "Death is preferable to a life of subordination to foreigners."—*King Chakradhwaj Singha on receiving Mogul demands for payment of the war-indemnity.*

10. "My ancestors were never subordinate to any other people; and I for myself cannot remain under the vassalage of any foreign power."—*King Chakradhwaj Singha.*

11. "It is the legitimate duty of a sovereign to restore the old limits of his dominions by defeating and destroying his enemies. His success in war can alone enhance his glory and renown. So, His Majesty's proposal is just and proper. We have been enjoying absolute and uninterrupted sovereignty from time immemorial, and the high-handed imperiousness of the Moguls has transcended the limits of our forbearance."—*Premier Atan Buragohain at King Chakradhwaj Singha's war-council.*

12. "We shall have to enquire whether these people have been able to obtain their rice and food. Rice is the most indispensable of all the necessities of life; and if it fails nothing will succeed."—*Premier Atan Buragohain at the war-council.*

13. "But, if on the other hand, there is no harmony and synchronism in the strokes of the three batches of rowers, the helmsman is inconvenienced in steering his shaft, the boat does not make any headway, and the spectators are far from being delighted. If the king directs his measures on the lines indicated above then only he will be able to vanquish his enemies and extend his territories to the old limits."—*Premier Atan Buragohain at the war-council.*

14. "Because the Moguls have discomfited us once, does it follow that we should make no attempt to throw off this position of subordination to them? They have discomfited us once, and we have dealt them severe blows on repeated occasions, and of this you are fully conversant."—*King Chakradhwaj Singha to Raja Prana Narayan.*

15. "But you know for yourself all about the manner in which we have repeatedly inflicted heavy blows



upon the Moguls. If God has inflicted on us a reverse on this single occasion, does it imply that we shall be subjected to discomfiture again?"—*King Chakradhwaj Singha to Raja Prana Narayan.*

16. "The enemy is in our immediate neighbourhood. How will it be possible to capture their leaders Syed Firoz and Syed Sana? The man whom I am going to appoint as general must be endowed with unusual grit, stamina and depth of judgment."—*King Chakradhwaj Singha to Lachit.*

17. "Could it be that there is no fit man in Your Majesty's realm? What are the enemies?—They are after all ordinary mortals. Shall we not find similar men in our own country? Your Majesty should only confer the dust of your feet, and the man equal to the occasion will be readily found."—*Lachit to King Chakradhwaj Singha.*

18. "It is my desire that your wives and children should be duly protected and preserved; and that I should acquire the prestige and reputation of having vanquished the Moguls. If you prove incompetent in the task of defeating the enemy at Itakhuli [Gauhati] you shall not be let off with impunity. And, do you think that there will be paucity of Phukans and Rajkhowas like yourselves?"—*King Chakradhwaj Singha's message to his commanders on the eve of the departure of the Ahom army to Gauhati.*

19. "It is now that I can eat my morsel of food with ease and pleasure."—*Chakradhwaj Singha on the re-occupation of Gauhati in 1667.*

20. "You have stated,—'I am greatly delighted to hear that you have reoccupied your old limits'. We expect such an expression of joy from you."—*Chakradhwaj Singha to Raja Jasamatta Rai.*

21. "My uncle is not greater than my country."—*Lachit Barphukan while executing his maternal uncle.*

22. "Tears rolled down the Barphukan's cheeks", writes an eye-witness, "and he said to himself,—'It is

a tragedy that my country has to face this dire catastrophe during my Phukanship. How will my king be saved? How will my people be saved? And how will my posterity be saved?" As he mused on the situation he became more and more agitated and restless. By a great mental effort he however was soon able to come back to himself. The Barphukan then went round the camps and units on a visit of inspection, and returned to his base after some time. A little later, he issued a command directing all his men to fall upon the enemy".—*Lachit Barphukan on sighting the vast numbers in the Mogul camp.*

23. "You are to note carefully that at the sight of our fortifications demoralisation has already started in the enemy's camp. His enthusiasm is already on the wane."—*Premier Atan Buragohain to the captains and soldiers.*

24. "One proves to be a knowing man if he can tune his measures to the exigency of the situation."—*Lachit Barphukan to Ram Singha.*

25. "As for his [Ram Singha's] request to give him fight for an hour, I would like to say that we are prepared to fight as long as there remains a drop of blood in our veins."—*Lachit Barphukan's reply to Ram Singha through Firoz Khan.*

26. "The poppy-seeds if pounded down will become a thin paste. Our army is as numerous and indissoluble as the sands in the tube despatched to you."—*Lachit Barphukan to Raja Ram Singha.*

27. "The Barphukan should only remain inviolate in his command, and we shall fight to the last drop of our blood."—*Assamese commanders and soldiers.*

28. "Instead of me I shall show him twenty thousand of my stalwarts who shall pound the Raja's soldiers to a thin paste."—*Buragohain Phukan.*

29. "Ram Singha is a mere servant, and he has no umbrella over his head. So I do not like to fight a duel.

with such a man."—*King Chakradhwaj Singha's reply to Ram Singha's request for a duel.*

30. "Each of our soldiers is a pillar of strength, and I have lost to-day ten thousand such stalwarts!"—*Lachit Barphukan after Alaboi battle.*

31. "Well, general, such a reverse should never shake your confidence in our ultimate victory. Eventualities of this character are normal in a protracted warfare. When you agitate the waters of a pond for catching large fishes the fish-catchers will be pricked by the thorny scales of the smaller fries. You should judge your success by the number of large catches."—*Premier Atan Buragohain to Lachit Barphukan.*

32. "Numerous chieftains of the mountainous regions have become our willing allies in the campaign. They are accompanied by a total strength of three lakhs of soldiers. They are not amenable to any considerations of right and wrong. Their participation in the war has been directly sanctioned by His Majesty, and they rush furiously against the enemy without waiting for the orders of the general. They are quick and sudden in their attacks, and their movements and actions cannot be presaged."—*Madhabcharan Katalci to Raja Ram Singha.*

33. "I am only a servant of His Majesty. Any treaty into which I may enter with the Raja will be received with the approbation of our sovereign. If the Raja should desire for a treaty, it should be concluded by all the parties concerned, and whose objects will be enhanced by continued observance. If such a treaty can be concluded the Raja will be praised in all quarters."—*Lachit Barphukan to Raja Ram Singha.*

34. "The Raja has been despatched by the Emperor of Delhi for his intelligence and skill in warfare. If he goes from here without the credit of a decisive victory over our arms the expectations made of him will no longer be justified."—*Lachit Barphukan to Raja Ram Singha.*

35. "Our sovereign the Swarga-Maharaja is the lord of the East, and the Padshah is the lord of the West. If they decide then we can surrender our territory, and you can also surrender Bengal. If we enter into any terms ourselves, our respective masters may refuse to ratify them."—*Lachit Barphukan to Raja Ram Singha.*

36. "If you want to give up Gauhati at this stage, what was the good of fighting so long causing such loss to our men and provisions? Ram Singha has pressed his demands with oaths and promises praying for the restoration of the old limits. Even if we agree it is not known whether the Mogul Emperor will accept Ram Singha's proposal which is like a highway made of ashes. There is also no guarantee whether Ram Singha's successor in the Assam command will respect the stipulations of his predecessor. What shall we do then? Besides, where shall we go if we abandon Gauhati? We shall have to abandon Gargaon as well, and take shelter in Namrup."—*Premier Atan Buragohain to Lachit Barphukan and other Gauhati commanders.*

37. "Tell your men I am going to die on this spot, and I never think of abandoning my charge. I have bought a slice of earth on the top of Chila Hill which will provide sufficient accommodation for my remains. If I survive I shall go after all the people have left this place."—*Lachit Barphukan at the battle of Saraighat.*

38. "O, my countrymen, do please flee if you want to pour poison on this platter of gold."—*Nara Hazarika at Aswakranta during the battle of Saraighat.*

39. "The Moguls are almost reaching Amrajuri. O, astrologer, you have paved the way for your annihilation, brought about my disgrace, and destroyed my bread!"—*Lachit Barphukan to Achyutananda Doloi during the battle of Saraighat.*

40. "His Majesty has given me the supreme command of the army here and placed at my disposal vast stores of provisions so that I may fight with the enemy. Should I now desert the fight and revert to the embraces

of my wives and children ?"—*Lachit Barphukan at the battle of Saraighat.*

41. "Let the Moguls capture me alive, and let my people go home in peace!"—*Lachit Barphukan at the battle of Saraighat.*

42. "How dare you bring such disgrace upon my head ? People will say that you loaded the boats having received my specific orders."—*Premier Atan Buragohain after the battle of Saraighat.*

43. "The enemy are sailing down the river, overpowered and disgraced, though they fought for one full year. I do not want to tarnish the fair name of my king and my ministers by plundering the fugitive soldiers."—*Lachit Barphukan on the proposal to attack Ram Singha's retreating army, another version.*

44. "Having fought for a length of time, and being ultimately vanquished Ram Singha is sailing down the river. The fame we have gained thereby is enough for us. Do you think we shall enrich His Majesty by a handful of broken swords and shields seized from the fugitives ? It will also cause the loss of a few thousand of our men who have already toiled so hard."—*Lachit Barphukan on the proposal to attack Ram Singha's retreating army, another version.*

## APPENDIX II

### EXTRACTS FROM HISTORICAL WORKS

1. Sir Jadunath Sarkar: *History of Aurangzeb*, Vol. III,—

"In December 1667, the Emperor, on hearing of the loss of Gauhati, had appointed Rajah Ram Singh, the son of Mirza Rajah Jai Singh, to recover the imperial prestige in Assam. . . . On the way through Patna the Rajah took with himself the Sikh *guru* Teg Bahadur. Ram Singh reached Rangamati in February 1668. But from the first his task was hopeless. Service in Assam was extremely arduous, and no soldier would go there unless . . . there is reason to believe that Ram Singha was sent to Assam as a punishment for his having secretly helped Shivaji to escape from captivity at Agra. . . . The situation was rendered worse by the insubordination and disloyalty of Rashid Khan, the Faujdar of Gauhati. . . . The attempts at peace failed. The Ahoms renewed their attacks, and the fresh troops that now joined Ram Singha (especially the Bengal *Zamindar* Manawwar Khan), bore down his apathy for war. A long course of desultory fighting followed, the general result of which was the success of the Ahoms. So, in March 1671, Ram Singha retired to Rangamati, foiled in his purpose and heartily sick of the war. Here on the Assam border he stayed for some years, but was too weak to attempt an advance again. Finally in 1676 he received permission to leave Bengal, and reached the imperial court in June."—Pages 212-216.

2. Sir Edward Gait: *A History of Assam*,—

"The negotiations with the Muhammadans continued. Raja Ram Singha proposed that the old boundary should be maintained, and the Barphukan expressed his concurrence, but, while he was waiting for the Ahom king's

confirmation, Ram Singha, who had received reinforcements and apparently suspected his sincerity, advanced with his army to Sitamari, and sent a detachment into Darrang....The Ahoms were successful on land, but their navy was forced to retreat to Barhila, and an army was thus also obliged to fall back. The arrival of the Barphukan with more ships enabled the Ahoms to return to the attack. This time the Muhammadan navy was beaten, and a second land victory was gained by the Ahoms....In March 1671, Ram Singha had become so weakened by repeated losses that he retreated, first to the Haran (Manaha?) river, and afterwards to Rangamati. The news of his departure was conveyed to Udayaditya, who received it with great joy, and loaded the Barphukan with presents."—*Pages 149-150.*

3. Memorandum containing an account of Maharaja Ram Singha's campaigns in Assam, received by the author from M. M. M. Khambatha, Registrar, Mahakma Khas, Jaipur, in August 1935,—

"In 1668 A.D., Maharaja Ram Singh was deputed to launch an attack on the Zamindar of Assam. The Emperor ordered Maharaja Ram Singh to take charge of the military stations of Gauhati, etc., from Syed Firoz Khan and Syed Salar Khan and to protect these stations. The Emperor informed Maharaja Ram Singha that he had issued orders to Umdatul-Mulk for the supply of provisions for the troops at the Gauhati Fort, and directed the Maharaja to get possession of the Gauhati Fort after the rainy season was over, and promised to send more troops to him.

"In March 1669 A.D., the Emperor, on the occasion of his birthday, raised the rank of the Maharaja to Panj-Hazari, in recognition of his meritorious services in connection with the attack on the Gauhati Fort, and directed him to conquer the Fort, if possible, or to plunder the country.

"Later on, in August 1669 A.D., the Emperor ordered Maharaja Ram Singh that as it was very difficult to conquer the Gauhati Fort in the near future and the troops too were not sufficient to cope with the task, he (the

Maharaja) should send Umrao Singh Hada back with Askar Khan, while he (the Maharaja) himself should meanwhile stay at Rangamati with the forces of Umdatul-Mulk; and added that when the rainy season was over, he should act according to the instructions of Umdatul-Mulk.

"In February 1676 A.D., the Emperor directed Maharaja Ram Singh to come back from Rangamati before the rainy season had set in, making over charge of that place to the person to be nominated by Umdatul-Mulk. The charge of Rangamati was first given to Abu-Nasr Khan and then to Askar Khan."

4. Lt. Col. James Tod: *The Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, Vol. II, Annals of Amber,—

"Jey Sing, the Mirza Raja, the title by which he is best known, restored by his conduct the renown of the Cutchwaha name, which had been tarnished by the two unworthy successors of Raja Maun. He performed great services to the Empire during the reign of Aurangzeb, who bestowed upon him the *munsab* of six thousand. He made prisoner the celebrated Sevaji, whom he conveyed to court, and afterwards, on finding that his pledge of safety was likely to be broken, was accessory to his liberation. But this instance of magnanimity was more than counterbalanced by his treachery to Dara, in the war of succession, which crushed the hopes of that brave prince. These acts, and their consequences, produced an unconquerable haughtiness of demeanour, which determined the tyrannical Aurangzeb to destroy him.

"The chronicle says that he had twenty-two thousand Rajput cavalry and twenty-two great vassal chiefs who followed him; that he would sit with them in *darbar*, holding two glasses, one of which he called Dehli, the other Satarra, and dashing one to the ground, would exclaim, "there goes Satarra; the fate of Dihli is in my right hand, and this with like facility I can cast away."

"These words reached the Emperor's ears, he had recourse to the expedient which ruined Marwar, of making a son the assassin of his father. He



promised the succession to the *gadi* of Amber to Keerut Sing, younger son of the Raja, to the prejudice of his elder brother Ram Singh, if he effected the horrid deed. The wretch having perpetrated the crime by mixing poison in his father's opium, returned to claim the investiture: but the king only gave him the district of Kamah. From this period, says the chronicle, Amber declined.

"Ram Singh, who succeeded, had the *munsab* of four thousand conferred upon him, and was sent against the Assamese."—Pages 327-328.

5. J. D. Cunningham: *A History of the Sikhs*,—

"Tegh Bahadur was general' . . . . . s the leader of the Sikhs....He was . . . . . as a pretende: . . . . . is a disturber of the peace, but he had . . . . . in the chief of Jaipur; the Rajput advocated his cause, saying such holy men rather went on pilgrimages than aspired to sovereignty, and he would take him with him on his approaching march to Bengal.

"Tegh Bahadur accompanied the Raja to the eastward. He again resided for a time at Patna, but afterwards joined the army, to bring success, says the chronicler, . . . . . against the chiefs of Assam. He . . . . . banks of the Brahmaputra, and he is stated to have convinced the heart of the Raja of Kamrup, and to have made him a believer in his mission."—Pages 63-64.

6. H. Blochmann: *Kuch Bihar and Asam*, in the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1872, Part I, No. 1, pages 49-101.

(i) "Gawahatti then was the actual frontier at Mir Jumlah's retreat, and remained so far four years, till the beginning 1078 A.H., or the very end of A.D. 1667. The re-conquest by the Assamese is the last event recorded in the '*Alamgirnamah*' (Bibl. Ind. Edit., p. 1068) as follows,—

"At this time (Rajab, 1078, or December 1667), reports were received by His Majesty from Bengal that

the Assamese with a numerous army and a large fleet had attacked Gawahatti, which is the frontier of Bengal. The Thanahdar, Sayyid Firuz Khan, could not in time receive assistance. He and most of his men bravely defended themselves, and sacrificed their lives in the path of loyalty (*Ubudiyat*). His Majesty resolved to punish the Assamese, and appointed Rajah Ram Singh to the command of an imperial corps, which was to be strengthened by troops of the Bengal army. Rajah Ram Singh, on the 21st Rajab 1078 A.H., (27th December, 1667) received as *khalat* a horse with a gilded saddle and a dagger with a belt adorned with pearls, and was sent to Assam. Naciri Khan, Kisari Singh Bhurtiah, Raghunath Singh of Mirthah, Bairam Deo Sisaudiah, and other Mancabdars, with 1,500 Ahadis and 500 artillery accompanied him."

Bibliotheca Indica Edition,—

(ii) Blochmann's extracts from *Maasir-i-Alamgiri*, Page 97. "Rajah Ram Singh, who was a commander of 4,000, *duaspah sihaspah* troopers, was promoted to a commander of 5,000, and his son Kishn Singh received a present of a *sarpesh* studded with jewels." End of 1080 A.H., or beginning of A.D. 1670.

Page 154. "On the 22nd Rabi II, 1087 (24th June, 1676) Rajah Ram Singh returned from Asam, and paid his respects at court.

Page 173. "On the 29th Muharram, 1090 (1st March, 1679) Shahrukh, a servant of Prince Muhammad A'zam brought a report to court which contained the account of the conquest of Gawahatti by His Majesty's troops. The messenger received a reward of Rs. 1,000; and a necklace of 91 pearls, valued at 2 lacs of Rupees, and a tassel (*turrah*) studded with jewels, of a value of 25,000 rupees, were sent to the Prince as presents."

(iii) Blochmann's footnote on pp. 98-99 of the J.A.S.B., 1872,—

"Ram Singh was the son of Jai Singh I of Amber (Jaipur) with whose assistance Aurangzeb had come to the throne.... He served under his father against Siwa; and when the Bhonsla and his son Samba presented

themselves at court, Aurangzab warned Ram Singha to have a sharp eye on them, and not to let them escape. But they fled (beginning of 1077), and Ram Singh fell into temporary disgrace, and lost his rank. The fact that Jai Singh died soon afterwards may be construed into a suspicion against Kirat Singh. But Ram Singh was immediately restored, received the title of Rajah, and a *mancab* of 4,000. In the same year, 1078 A.H., he was ordered to Gawahatti in Assam. Ram Singha remained in Assam till the middle of 1086 A.H. (1675 A.D.), his long stay being evidently a punishment. He died soon after."

### APPENDIX III

#### CONTEMPORARY DIPLOMATIC LETTERS

These epistles are inserted in the old Assamese manuscript chronicles or Buranjis at the appropriate place and in the proper context, in support and amplification of the events described. The original letters are to be found in *Kamrupar Buranji* and *Jayantia Buranji*, edited by S. K. Bhuyan; and in Ms. Assam Buranjis, Nos. 6, 7 and 8.

1. *From Nawab Allah Yar Khan, the Mogul general, to Momai-tamuli Barbarua, the commander of the Ahom forces, dated the month of Magh, saka 1561,—*

"Here we are well, and we always desire your welfare and advancement. We have been acquainted with the contents of your letter. We wish that our friendship should ever be on the increase, and that you should not entertain in your heart any misgiving in this respect. You have referred to the agreement relating to the fixation of our mutual boundaries, namely, the river Barnadi on the north bank, and Asurar Ali Road on the south bank; and you have given the assurance that these boundaries will never be altered or violated. This course of action will lead to the revival of our friendship, and the cows and Brahmans of both countries will live in safety and peace. This arrangement will also establish your reputation and prestige; and our names will be blessed in all countries without any trace of infamy.

"I have sent herewith my men Sek Meda, and Akadas of Jharkhanda, with your Ukils Sanatan and Kanu Sarma. Please send them back in ten or five days after having presented them before your sovereign. If this is done there will not remain any misgiving or suspicion between us. You will hear everything from the lips of the Ukils." Then follows a list of presents.

2. *From Momai-tamuli Barbarua to Allah Yar Khan, dated the month of Jaistha, 1562 saka,—*

"Your two Ukils, Sek Meda and Akadas, have arrived here, and we are delighted to hear from them that you are well. You have informed us that both parties will be benefited by respecting the boundaries now fixed, namely, the river Barnadi on the north, and Asurar Ali on the south, and that our reputation and prestige will ever be on the increase and will not know any abatement. It is praiseworthy that you have written like this. The friendship and promises of noble men should not be retracted; and you should see that they are progressively maintained.

"In accordance with your request we have sent back your Ukils after ten or five days. We took them with us and presented them before our king. Your Ukils will communicate to you what His Majesty had told them.

"In former times we carried on negotiations on many occasions with the Nawabs at Calcutta. Now, you are entrusted with the charge of affairs at Gauhati; and I am vested with similar responsibilities here. So please write to us about what you consider necessary. If we proceed in this way, why should not our friendship be of long duration? You will know what remains to be known from Sanatan and Kanu Sarma." Then follows a list of presents.

3. *Terms of the agreement entered into by King Jayadhwaj Singha of Assam, with the Mogul general Nawab Mir Jumla, executed at Ghilajhari-ghat in Tipam, on the 9th Magh, 1584 saka, or January 23, 1663 A.D.—*

"Written by Sri Raja Jayadhwaj Singha, Sri Bargo-hain, Sri Buragohain, Sri Barpatra Gohain, and Sri Raj-mantri of the Kingdom of Assam.

"Some time ago, during the administration of Sultan Shuja, we looted the Padshahi garrison at Gauhati, and settled the imperial subjects in our land after having captured them from their villages. For this reason, Srijut Nawab Khan-khana [Mir Jumla] came with a Padshahi army and invaded our territories. We fled, and took shelter in the hills of Namrup. In order to

preserve our life and our homeland, we have solemnly promised before Nawab Dilal Khan [Dilir Khan] that we would deliver for the use and service of the Padshah the following,—20,000 tolas of gold; 1,20,000 rupees in silver; and 90 elephants; and also the daughter of our monarch, and the daughter of the Tipam Raja. The following four pergunas are also given as dowry to our princess,—Darrang perguna extending up to the Bharari river in the north bank; and on the south bank, Dumaria perguna as far as the Kalang river, and pergunas Kajali and Beltala.

“We have presently made over 20,000 tolas of gold, and 40,000 tolas of silver, and 90 elephants. Till we completely pay off the remaining 80,000 tolas of silver, one son of each of the ministers, Bargohain, Buragohain, Barpatra Gohain and Rajmantri, will remain as a hostage at Gauhati. Besides, a notable of our kingdom, with a contingent of paiks, will attend on the officer who will be appointed Fauzadar at Gauhati. We also promise to make over to the Padshah 20 elephants every year, and they will be delivered annually at Gauhati without any hesitation or delay on our part.

“Entering into and accepting the above terms we have written this agreement, whereon we put our signature-seals :

Place	Ghilajhari-ghat of Tipam,
Signature-seal of	Sri Bargohain, ,
”	Sri Buragohain,
”	Sri Barpatra Gohain,
”	Sri Rajmantri.”

4. *From Nawab Shaista Khan, Mogul viceroy of Bengal, to Atan Buragohain, Prime Minister of Assam, dated 1585 saka,—*

“I sent up your two Ukils Sanatan and Chandra Kandali with a letter to the Umrao. He presented them before the Padshah who expressed his satisfaction with

your devotion and solicitude, of which you will learn from the two Ukils. I have sent this time Panditrai who is a highly trusted man of ours. You should send him back soon. You are fortunate that such a devout Brahman and a Pandit is visiting your place out of his good-will towards you. You should therefore make him satisfied, for which you will be greatly benefited, and earn both piety and religious merit.

"You should also expedite the despatch of the remaining portion of the indemnity; ... should no longer be delayed. My heart longs for your friendship, but I do not find out any trace of such sentiments in you. It is now one year and a half since I came here, and I cannot account for your omission to write to me enquiring of my welfare. I am always solicitous of your happiness; and so I say this for your benefit that you will gain a lot by pleasing the Padshah by your devotion and deference. You know the kind of man the Padshah is; so you should act in a way that your subjects and your cows and Brahmans may remain in peace. You will hear a good deal more from Madhacharan and Purnananda." *Abridged.*

*Note :—*The letter bears the year 1585 *saka*, date 29, without the mention of the month, which must be Chaitra, bringing the date to 12th April 1664 or near about. The envoys had left Assam on Pous 4, 1585 *saka*. The Umrao referred to might be some high dignitary at the Mogul court through whom audiences could be arranged. The Buranjis take the opportunity of the Assamese envoys' visit to describe the splendour of the Delhi court. Emperor Aurangzeb said to the envoys,— "I shall return the territories which are in excess of the Koch limits, and I shall also order the repatriation of the Assamese subjects whom our men have brought as captives."

5. *From Raja Jasamatta Rai of Jayantia, to King Jayadhwaj Singha of Assam, dated 10th Jaistha 1585 saka, or 29th May 1663 or near about,—*

After compliments. "We had heard that the Moguls had invaded your kingdom, but we regret that you did

not inform us of the same. Jayanta and Gargaon are not separate and divisible. At your discomfiture at the hands of the Moguls I am feeling as if my own country has been harassed and humiliated by the enemy. What has happened cannot be undone: henceforward we should attempt to strengthen our bonds of friendship. The Moguls have simply invaded your country; they have not been able to hold it under their domination permanently. The land, the people are all intact, as well as your august self. Measures should now be concerted to organise more effective co-operation between ourselves so that we may wreak vengeance upon the Moguls. Then only we shall be happy, and the pangs of our heart disappear." *Abridged.*

6. *From Manik Singha, chief of Manikya, a vassal state under Jayantia, to King Jayantia, dated 10th Jaistha 1585 saka,—*

After compliments. "You have referred to the capture of two of our subjects by the Moguls. Why two? We would not have been sorry even if we had lost ten or twenty thousand men for your sake. We are aggrieved that we could not render you any assistance with our men. We have no greater friend than you are; and we know that your sentiments are not dissimilar. Distance becomes proximity if the hearts of the two parties are pure and sincere, as you know from the saying in Sanskrit,—“He who is attached to one does not recognise any distance.” Gargaon and Jayantia are not two. What pains me most is the fact that I was living in peace and comfort while your country was overrun by the Moguls, and that I had no opportunity to order ten or twenty thousand of my stalwarts to run to your aid in your crisis. The Moguls have done according to their strength and might. They should now get reprisals for their mischiefs. Nothing is more disgraceful than the fact that our stalwarts were sitting idle at home when our friends were reported to be in dire distress. This humiliation will be blotted out only on that day when we shall be able to extirpate our foe." *Abridged.*



7. *Letter from Raja Prana Narayan of Cooch Behar, to King Jayadhwaj Singha of Assam, dated Ashar 1585 saka,—*

"I have been overpowered by your epistle which you have written to me in consonance with the spirit of the ages. You are Srikrishna, and you should consider me as your devoted friend Arjuna, and I shall act as directed by you. Our friendship is not of to-day's growth. An ancestor of yours established friendship with my great-grandfather by taking solemn oaths.

"I lost my kingdom, and so you lost yours. As we did not harbour evil intentions towards each other both of us have now regained our lost territory. You should not feel distressed at having temporarily lost your dominion since Ramachandra, Suratha and Yudhishthira could not escape similar calamities. But their prestige has not been affected as they regained their kingdoms by dint of their exertions. Our prestige will suffer only if we remain inactive in the matter of regaining our territories. As you have written, we must act in a manner that will lead to the establishment of our friendly relations.

"I hear you are incurring large expenditure for re-establishing your authority and prestige, and I shall do the same for your benefit of which you will get proof's in due course. I have suffered from my own men more than I deserved. The amount of suffering which you have undergone on account of your own men is not really your due. Now, I have understood the whole situation, and so have you. I have punished, tortured and executed a large number of the offenders according to their guilt, and I shall not desist from doing so in future. I want that you should follow suit; then only you will be able to exercise sovereign authority in your kingdom for which punishment of miscreants is the foremost weapon. You should now collect and store food-provisions to last for three years for the use of the soldiers who will garrison your forts which are now under construction. You should also arrange for weapons and ammunitions as may be necessary, in addition to

those which will be needed for our military purpose. Those who profess to be your friends could be enlisted in the army together. Those who hesitate to take up arms in spite of their declaration to be your friends should be considered as traitors, and punished accordingly. The people in your neighbourhood should be clothed and fed, and made friends by that process. So please proceed on the lines you think best. As far as I am concerned I am following the above course, and shall continue to do so. I will communicate to you through your Ukil how seeds of our mutual friendship can be sown. I hope you will put my suggestions into practice, so that they may bear leaves and blossoms, and finally ripen into fruits. We should also arrange for the speedy interchange of information about the progress of our preparations," *Abridged*. Then follows an account of Mir Jumla's occupation of Cooch Behar and the subsequent recovery of the kingdom.

8. *From Raja Prana Narayan of Cooch Behar to Raja-sahur Rajmantri of Assam, dated 5th Ashar, 1585 saka—*

"After Baduli Phukan had gone over to the side of the Moguls, you acted very wisely by persuading your monarch to send them away by paying them some indemnity, in order to protect your country with its cows and Brahmans. This action of yours is in conformity with the injunctions laid down in the treatises on political science, according to which a king, when confronted by a powerful enemy, has no other alternative but to gain time by entering into a treaty; and you have done what the exigency of the situation demanded. Appropriate measures, in due comprehension of one's strength, can be adopted in time only if there subsist the king and his country." *Abridged*.

*Note:* Temporary accommodation with a conquering enemy with the object of attacking him when preparations are complete was the accepted policy of Ahom strategy. It was reiterated by King Chakrabartya Barbarua during the first stage of the Moamaria rebellion, when in 1769, owing to the victory of the insurgents, the king Lakshmi Singha left the capital Rangpur and took

shelter at Chintamani-garh. The Barbarua said,—“If a king sustains defeat at the hands of a ruler of another territory, the former should by diplomacy secure the withdrawal of the victorious force by entering into a treaty the terms of which should be immediately fulfilled. Then when a favourable opportunity occurs, the vanquished Raja should, with a well equipped army, attack and defeat his enemy, and re-establish himself in his old authority.”

9. *From King Jayadhwaj Singha of Assam, to Raja Prana Narayan of Cooch Behar, dated 26th Bhadra 1585 saka, 7th September 1663 or near about,—*

“You have done well by referring to our friendship which has been subsisting since the time of Biswa Singha, and which we have maintained till this day. You have asked me to exert myself to regain the independence of my kingdom, which is a very sound and inspiring advice. Even when the sun is once eclipsed, does it not make its appearance again? We are making preparations according to our might, and I hope you are also doing the same. When fire and wind act in unison they take no time in burning the trees and grasses. So we can also defeat and destroy our enemy if we establish an effective alliance between us two. Please see that there is no interruption in the exchange of communications between the two countries.” *Abridged.*

10. *From Lechai Ghorakowanr Barphukan, Ahom viceroy at Kaliabar, to Nawab Dilir Khan, Mogul commander, dated 8th Phalgun, 1585 saka, or 20th February 1664,—*

After compliments. “You have reminded us of the elephants and the money. In reply I am to say that in the month of Kartik we had sent to Rashid Khan, through Gadai, 1,00,000 rupees; and through the present Ahadis 44,000 rupees and 44 elephants; and we are arranging to procure the remaining elephants and money. If we cannot send the whole portion then we shall send whatever we are able to obtain. Delay has been caused no doubt; but it is due to the depopulation of the country. It will lighten our burden if we could deliver the whole

tribute. Please remember your promises about the old boundaries, and your actions should lead to their preservation." *Abridged.* Then follows a list of presents which included 20 pieces of musk and one seer of borax powder.

11. *From King Chakradhwaj Singha of Assam, to Raja Prana Narayan of Cooch Behar, dated 2nd Ashar 1586 saka, or 16th June 1664 or near about,—*

"The friendship between the two kingdoms is not of recent origin; it has subsisted for a long time. We should now act in a manner which will lead to the progressive advancement of our amicable relations. You have said,—'We are greatly distressed to hear that the Moguls are enjoying possession of your territories, and are capturing elephants in your forests.' You have said the right thing. One is not entitled to the name of a friend if he is not mortified at heart by seeing the losses and sufferings of his compatriot, however negligible these losses and sufferings may be. I am really very happy at what you have said out of your friendly sentiments towards me. But you know for yourself all about the manner in which we have repeatedly dealt heavy blows upon the Moguls. If God has inflicted on us a reverse on this single occasion, does it imply that we shall be subjected to discomfiture again? We are equally distressed to hear of your losses and sufferings at the hands of the Moguls. It is therefore proper that we should now exert ourselves to remove our sufferings by overthrowing the enemy. Our preparations should be conducted in such a way that the enemy may not find any loophole."

12. *From Raja Prana Narayan of Cooch Behar, to King Chakradhwaj Singha of Assam, dated 5th Magh 1586 saka, or 19th January 1665,—*

"I hope you will share with us the pleasure we have derived from the recovery of our territories. A friend is one who participates in the afflictions and sorrows of his compatriot, and becomes delighted when he hears of the other's happiness. You have said that from your single discomfiture which Fate had ordained it does not mean that you shall be subjected to repeated reverses:

you have written like a wise man. Do you not know that Fortune is a very ~~powerful factor~~? What has happened is through the ~~powerful factor~~ of Fate which alone is to be blamed, and nobody can overcome it. When Fortune becomes favourable even a weakling can overthrow a giant. If we two combine the enemy will not obtain any superior advantage; on the other hand Fortune will offer a fitting opportunity to both of us for retaliation and revenge.

"You will be glad to learn that we have been able to recover Fatepur pergana from the occupation of the Moguls; and we shall similarly be delighted to hear that you have regained possession of your lost pergasas." *Abridged.*

13. *From King Chakradhara Singha of Assam, to Raja Prana Narayan . . . . . dated 24th Magh 1587 saka, or 7th February 1666,—*

After compliments, "I am ever solicitous of your friendship. You have sent the verbal message that war has commenced between Shewa [Shivaji] and the Moguls, and that Shewa having defeated the Moguls has pushed them back to a distance of twenty days' march; that Daud Khan has fallen and that Dilil [Dilir] Khan is wounded, and that the Badshah has come from Delhi to Agra. It cannot be predicted as to who become vanquished and who become victorious. You have further informed me that you are engaged in putting your forts and dikes in order; and you have asked us to strengthen our fortifications and to train our soldiers. It is meet and proper that you should give us such advice and encouragement. Because the Moguls have humiliated us once, does it follow that we should make no attempt to throw off this position of subordination to them? They have discomfited us once, and we have dealt them severe blows on repeated occasions, and of this fact you are fully conversant.

"I have come to learn that Gopalcharan who had been sent to your place was killed on the way by the men of Panbari, and so I have ceased to send men to you in

large numbers, and you should also do the same. The remaining message will be communicated by Sri Bhima and Sri Nandan.”

14. *From King Chakradhwaj Singha of Assam, to Raja Prana Narayan of Cooch Behar, dated 28th Sravan, 1589 saka, or 13th August, 1667, or near about,—*

After compliments, “It is significant that we have not as yet been able to inflict counter-blows upon the Moguls in return for those which you, a friendly Raja, and myself have received from them. Now, the opportune moment has arrived. I am attacking the Moguls garrisoned at Gauhati, and you should fall upon those stationed on your frontier.”

15. *From Raja Jasamatta Rai of Jayantia, to King Chakradhwaj Singha of Assam, dated 9th Kartik, 1589 saka, or 26th October 1667, or near about,—*

“Gargaon and Jayantia are not separate. On account of their indissoluble friendship they have been considered as constituting one single house. Your elephants and your horses are decorating our stalls, and our princesses are residing in your palace. Even now you are soliciting a princess of ours. We have heard that you have despatched an army to fight with the Moguls for the purpose of recovering your lost possessions. We are really over-joyed to hear it. The Moguls are your enemy as well as ours. I have a contingent completely ready for despatch by the Dimarua route, and I am only waiting for definite instructions from you. You will hear from the envoy the information that we have communicated about the Moguls of Dhacca. You should fight with the Moguls carefully.” *Abridged.*

16. *From King Chakradhwaj Singha of Assam, to Raja Jasamatta Rai of Jayantia, dated 4th Pous, 1590 saka, or 20th December 1668 or near about,—*

“There have been matrimonial alliances between our two princely families; and these relations, according to your own admission, continue till this day. You should offer your niece only if you have no daughter. Could you say that you nourish the same affection for your

niece as you do for your daughter? You should, therefore, give your own daughter in marriage. You have stated,—“I am greatly delighted to hear that you have returned to the old limits.” We expect such an expression from you. You have further said,—“An army is ready for being despatched through Dimarua, and we are waiting for your advice.” You know well that in the past we have never followed any assigned route. As promised you should despatch immediately a force of twenty or thirty thousand men, and inform us of the fact. We shall bring them by any route which may be expedient; they will be employed to help us in constructing forts and ramparts.”

*Note:* Dimarua had proved a stumbling block to Jayantia's scheme of territorial expansion. The passage of the Jayantia contingent through Dimarua would serve the additional object of its humiliation at the hands of Jayantia.

17. *From the Mogul general Raja Ram Singha of Amber, to the Ahom commander-in-chief Lachit Barphukan, saka 1591,—*

After compliments are exchanged, “We are sending our two men Sajua and . . . . . was a great deal of friendship between Nawab Allah Yar Khan and your father. Your reputation cannot but be established if you now make an attempt to revive that friendship, on the other hand your fame will be enhanced thereby. Our promises will be regarded as pillars of gold and silver, and they will endure as long as the sun and the moon remain in the heavens. If you are desirous of sowing the seeds of amity then please send a present reply. I need not write more as you know . . . . . : one piece of *banat*, and two glass-cups.”

*Note:* In a postscript to the above letter Ram Singha added: “Please relinquish Gauhati if you want to remain in the old relations of friendship, and make over the son of Syed Piroz, Syed Sana Bar-Bakshi.” About the same time Ram Singha shot a message to Lachit Barphukan on the point of an arrow demanding the

renewal of friendship, in which he said,—“I, Raja Ram Singha, son of the illustrious and magnanimous Srijut Mirza Raja Jai Singha, have come in person.”

18. *From Lachit Barphukan to Raja Ram Singha, saka 1591. Ram Singha is addressed as “the son of Sri Srijut Mirza Raja Jai Singha.”—*

After compliments. “We solicit your welfare and your happiness. What you have communicated through Sajua and Abdulla is considered by us as being conducive to friendship and amity. My father the Barbarua had entered into a friendly settlement with Allah Yar Khan; this fact has conferred upon them credit and renown which prevails till this day. If you can now do the same then the fame of both of us will be perpetuated till the sun and the moon remain in the sky. If you are desirous of this friendship, then please send Panditrai to me. I have nothing more to add. You are the lord of Amber, son of Jai Singha, and the son-in-law of Raja Mandhata. The terms of any agreement entered into with such a person will be rendered effective if they are accompanied by seemly and appropriate conduct and not otherwise. The other matters of this place will be communicated to you by Sri-naran and Ram-charan.” Then follows a list of presents.

19. *From Raja Ram Singha to Lachit Barphukan, saka 1591,—*

After compliments. “I am sending to you Panditrai and Kabisekhar. Now, you should give active proofs of your friendship towards us, and this act will lead to the preservation of cows and Brahmans. Any arrangement that we may agree upon will be always respected, and it will not know any transgression. The remaining matters will be communicated to you by Panditrai.”

20. *From Lachit Barphukan to Raja Ram Singha, saka 1591,—*

After compliments. “I am sending back Panditrai and Kabisekhar. You have communicated to us messages of friendship, but you have forgotten what had happened in the past. We desire that we should both remain in our respective positions; and your promises should



relate to the preservation of the old limits. I have nothing more to add as you know everything. You will hear the remaining matters from Madhacharan Kaupatia and Ramananda, and your own men Panditrai and Kabisekhar."

*Note:* On receiving this letter Ram Singha said to Kaupatia Madhabcharan,—“Well Madhacharan Kaupatia, there is endless coming and going of Ukils, but no real friendship has been on evidence. You utter words of peace, but at the same time you do not abandon your war-array.”

21. *From Rashid Khan to Lachit Barphukan, dated Ashar, 1592 saka,—*

“I had come here before with Nawab Khan-khana and Dilir [Dilil] Khan; and now, I have come again with Ram Singha under the orders of the Emperor of Delhi. The Bar-Nawab-Phukan Gohainji and myself have been friends from before. The revival of that friendship will bring about the happiness and prosperity of both the parties.”

*Note:* Rashid Khan was appointed Gauhati Fauzadar by Mir Jumla, but was soon replaced by Firoz Khan. Rashid Khan accompanied Ram Singha's expedition as the Raja's second-in-command. It is recorded in an Assamese chronicle that the above letter was sent independently by Rashid Khan to Lachit Barphukan without the permission of his chief, for which Ram Singha took him to task. The letter was placed in a tube which was then thrown into the Ahom camp. It was picked up by an Assamese sentry on duty who made it over to him. As a punishment for Rashid Khan's conduct, Ram Singha ordered his Rajputs to cut the Khan's tents. The Raja also reprimanded him for beating the trumpet in an unusual manner. For these two grievances Rashid Khan sailed down the river saying,—“If I attack Ram Singha I am sure to be defeated by his Pathans and Rajputs. I shall besides incur the displeasure of the Emperor.”

## APPENDIX IV

### A NOTE ON RAM SINGHAR YUDDHAR KATHA

Ms. Assam Buranji No. 12 is entitled *Ram Singhar Yuddhar Katha*, or an account of the war with Ram Singha. The original manuscript was obtained by the D.H.A.S. in 1934 from Nath Gogoi, B.Sc., of Cherekapar village near Sibsagar town. The chronicle is devoted entirely to the engagements and negotiations with Ram Singha. Prominence is given to superstitions and signs of the stars, and to the sayings and doings of two astrologers, Churamani and Sarobac, both of whom directly participated in the campaign, not as combatants but as astrologers.

The narrative commences from the withdrawal of the Ahom forces from the garrisons near the Manaha river on 11th Chaitra 1590 *saka*, or c. March 25, 1669 A.D. It ends abruptly in the first phase of the battle of Alaboi, with the events of Friday, Aswin 5, 1592 *saka*, or c. 29th September 1670. The language is archaic Assamese prose, and the text is mutilated, with irrecoverable gaps here and there. There are strings of Sanskrit passages cited by Churamani in support of his feelings and opinions. It will be difficult for an unaided reader to trace the sequence of the events, or find out the exact significance of some minute details. I have made extensive use of this chronicle in my present book *Lachit Barphukan and His Times*, though I have confined myself only to those facts which can be deduced with certainty.

The manuscript has got 28 folios with writings on both sides. There are two series of pages; the first, from Folios 1 to 7, and the second from Folios 3 to 23. We have thus duplicates of Folios 3 to 7, though the corresponding contents are not the same. The first set of seven folios represent perhaps an earlier version; and

the second set, Folios 3 to 23, include the entire matter of Folios 1 to 7 of the first set, with textual variations here and there. We shall distinguish the two sets by calling them *First version* and *Second version*.

A few passages are reproduced below to acquaint the reader with the tone and spirit of the chronicle, and with the grounds for believing that the author is Samudra Churamani which name is an appellation of Achyutananda Doloi who figures so prominently in *Assam Buranji, S.M.*—

(1) The Barphukan asked Samudra Churamani Ganak,—“Please calculate and tell me who will be defeated and who will be victorious in the war, the date of the battle, and the day of the enemy’s defeat.”—*Folio 2, 1st version.*

(2) Having heard this Samudra Churamani Doloi said,—“The hostilities will commence on the 8th day of Baisakh, and a pitched battle will take place on the 11th. The issue of this engagement will be favourable to us. One Senapati or commander will however perish”—*Folio 2, 1st version.*

(3) The Patra-Mantri [Ahom cabinet] convened a Barmel [grand assembly of officers and men], and they were despatched by the Swargadeo to the war. The Phukans said to the king,—“We do not want other Ganaks or astrologers, we want these two [Churamani and Sarobar]”. The king said,—“All right, let the Ganaks go. I shall present them elephants on their return”—*Folio 3, 1st version.*

(4) All spoke about the advent of a vast number of Moguls. One day [the Barphukan] climbed the fortifications, and witnessed the Moguls, and he asked others also to climb and see. Having seen as reported, tears in profusion flowed from the eyes of the Phukan. He then said in his mind,—“It is a tragedy that my country has to face this dire catastrophe during my Phukanship. How will my king be saved? How will my people be saved? How will my posterity be saved?” As he meditated on the situation he became more and more restless. By a great mental effort he,

however, was soon able to come back to himself. The Barphukan then went round the different camps and units, and returned to his base a little later. Shortly afterwards, he issued a command directing all his men to fall upon the enemy.—*Folio 7, 1st version; Folio 6, 2nd version.*

(5) The Swargadeo said,—“Well, Ganaks, please calculate and consult the books, and tell me what Ram Singha and Lachit Phukan will do. This should be found out by all the Dolois [astrologers].” The Dolois then consulted their scriptures and said,—“Ram Singha has come as a member of *Musa-barga* [rodent species] and Lachit Barphukan is going as one of *Birala-barga* [feline species]”—*Folio 3, 2nd version.*

(6) The Patra-Mantri then asked the Ganaks about the date of the enemy's arrival, the date of the battle, and the parties who would be defeated or victorious. Having heard this the two Ganaks, Churamani and Sarobar, made calculations, and said,—“The landing will take place on the 8th Baisakh, and the battle on the 11th. In the battle one [commander] of ours will perish.” On Saturday, Chaitra 15, 1590 *saka*, [c. 29th March 1669 A.D.] the army of Swarga Maharaja became settled at Gauhati.—*Folio 3, 2nd version.*

(7) During the course of the very same night the Phukan saw a dream. On the morrow he summoned to his presence Bahbaria, Churamani, Sarobar and Machai [Ahom astrologer], and narrated his dream before them.—*Folio 6, 2nd version.*

(8) The Sarujana Phukan [Lachit] said,—“Listen all of you. The man who will leave the protection will be instantly killed by me with this [weapon]. We should, by despatching emissaries, [to] the Majesty of the roads and bastions allotted to the respective commanders [for defence].—*Folio 11.*

(9) The Gohains and the Phukans then said,—“The flowers of the gourd are beautiful when they blossom, but when they fall they all drop down in a second. We shall count only when we shall see [i.e., we shall

consider our preparation to be perfect only when we become . . . 11.

(10) . . . engagement we two Ganaks were subjected to a severe fright. We asked the crew of a war-boat to ferry us across the river; and as we were proceeding towards the north bank we were . . . middle of the river by the enemy. The Moguls speeded up their boats—four in number—and the fight continued for about two *dandas* [one *danda* = 24 minutes]. All around me I saw men dying from bullet wounds. A bullet passed through the forehead of one man, and the blood gushing out of the wound fell upon Sarobar, who then shouted out, "O, Churamani, I am fallen!". After this he became unconscious and fell down on the floor of the boat. I made a small wall of protection with the help of twenty shields belonging to the dead soldiers, and concealed myself under it. I then began to cite the name of the goddess Mother Chandi. Nineteen of the shields were hit by bullets, and only one remained uninjured.—*Folio 14.*

(11) Having heard of the incident the Barphukan became angry with us, and enquired as to who permitted us to board a war-vessel, saying,—“We shall be helpless if the Ganaks perish. Their strength [calculation] is our main prop.” Churamani then replied,—“In the war of the Mahabharata, men died in different theatres of war; and no trace could be found of them”—*Folio 14.*

(12) Bhakatdah and Dhuli used to move between the camp of the Ahoms and that of the Moguls. Ram Singh made enquiries of them, saying,—“Please tell me why a Kshattriya like myself has not been able to attain success in this war. What is their strategy like? Who are their Sardars, and what are their names?” To this Bhakatdah replied,—“Listen, O, Maharaja, there is one Rupswarga [Rukma?] Buragohain, and one Barphukan named Lachit....With these Nababs has come one Churamani Daivajna. When he despatches the soldiers to the battle-field after having properly calculated with the help of the

Sastras the army will not know a thing called defeat. You cannot dream of victory when you are confronted by these invincibles.”—*Folios 16-17.*

(13) Bhakatdah said,—“Well, Churamani, having heard of your reputation Ram Singha has asked me to present you before him in order that he may judge for himself your erudition and your merit. He has promised to send ten thousand rupees.” Having heard his words I thought within myself,—“If I consent to go I may be captured in return for my participation in the slaughter of so many of their men. The Phukan may also accuse me for having visited the enemy’s camp. The king may also charge me with a serious offence.” I then informd the Phukan, and he became very angry, and said,—“What will you do if the Moguls make you a prisoner?”. Then he [Bhakadah] attempted to take [me to Ram Singha’s camp] by kidnapping.—*Folio 17.*

(14) Let us bring to an end the *pratiksha* which we have heard till now. After *Raja Chakradhwaj* became a *saturu* [literally, enemy, i.e., he died] in the fourth month [Bhadra], 1591 *saka*.—*Folio 18.*

(15) Having received the letter of Ram Singha, the Patra-Mantri began to entertain misgivings about their success, and held secret consultations on the following lines,—“If we come out of our forts and fight [on the plains] we may have to encounter a defeat, as one soldier of theirs can vanquish one hundred men of ours. Who can meet the enemy face to face? Our strength lies in naval fights; in land-fights we are not up to the mark.” They entertained grave fears in their minds to which, however, they did not give any outward expression.—*Folio 18.*

(16) The Charingia Phukan then opened his lips,—“I shall give a reply to this. Meanwhile Sambhar and Churamani, let me know what you have got to say.” Churamani addressed the assembly as follows,—“I shall describe the perils of death to which males,

Kshattriyas and warriors are exposed," [here follows a Sanskrit passage].—*Folios 18-19.*

(17) The Phukan [Lachit] obtained proofs [of the truth of astrological prediction] which he desired, and there did not occur any discrepancy. He showered praises saying,—“Praise be to our Churamani. He has brought under his control the whole science of warfare.”—*Folio 21.*

From the above facts recorded in *Ram Singhar Yuddhar Katha* the following deductions can safely be made:

(a) The selection of Churamani Daivajna and Sarobar Daivagna by the Patra-Mantri of Assam to the exclusion of other astrologers shows that these two scholars were the pick of their profession. “The aristocracy or Patrah-Muntree”, wrote Captain Thomas Welsh in 1794, “was composed of the three Gohains and the two Ministers of State. The three Gohains or Patra were the Burh Patrah Gohain, Burh Gohain and Boorah Gohain. They were permanent and hereditary counsellors of State, little inferior to the Monarch in rank. On all occasions their counsel, and on all important affairs their concurrences were indispensable. They proclaimed the Monarch and could depose him in the instance of incapacity or great delinquency.” The two Mantris or executives, referred to by Welsh were the Barbarua and Barpl. The Patra-Mantri used to be held responsible to decide upon the operational details in the plan of war against Ram Singha. The opinion of such a responsible body as the Patra-Mantri, the highest administrative authority in Assam, about the merits of Churamani and Sarobar was undoubtedly based on the two astrologers’ exceptional qualifications and abilities.

(b) Of the two, Churamani was more erudite and useful than his colleague Sarobar, as we know from the tributes paid to Churamani by Lachit Barphukan, and Ram Singha’s attempt to entice him and not Sarobar.

(c) Churamani was a participant in the events described in the chronicle as the pre-eminent role of

an astrological adviser. Though not a fighter, he had to encounter the incidental perils of an armed conflict.

(d) Churamani was the narrator of the events and the writer of the chronicle as we know from the use of the first person in many places.

(e) Churamani was also known as Samudra Churamani Doloi which appellation appears in the First version. In the Second version, and in the same context, he is mentioned as only Churamani. The event in connection with which the name Samudra Churamani is used, namely, consultations with the astrologers about the dates and issues of the conflict, took place long before the battle of ... use of the words "Samudra Churamani" at that time was perhaps considered to be unwarranted and anticipatory, and was ... in the 2nd version as a second thought.

In *Assam Buranji*, recovered from the family of Sukumar Mahanta of North Gauhati, an astrologer named Achyutananda Doloi plays a very important part in the battle of Saraighat. He was by the side of Lachit Barphukan at a very critical juncture. According to Achyutananda's calculations the auspicious moment for commencing an attack did not arrive, even though the Moguls were pressing very hard, and ... was anxious to fire the gun [*Khen-hiloi*, ...] as a signal to start the offence. The ... highly incensed and threatened Achyutananda with immediate beheadal, saying,—“O, Ganak, I shall take off your head long before His Majesty has done so.” The tragedy was, however, averted by Achyutananda's announcement, a few minutes later, of the auspicious moment for firing the signal gun. In the fight that ensued the Assamese obtained a decisive victory over the army of Raja Ram Singha. In recognition of his faithful services Achyutananda was richly rewarded by the Ahom Swargadeo. Achyutananda was given the title of *Samudra-khari*, literally, a sea-scholar, as the battle in connection with which the Doloi rendered distinguished service was fought in the waters of the



Brahmaputra. The Assamese used to give the name *Sagar* even to tanks, viz., Jai-sagar, Sib-sagar, Gauri-sagar, which would literally mean, *Jai-sea*, *Sib-sea*, *Gauri-sea*. In *Assam Buranji, S.M.*, there is no mention of any other astrologer in connection with the battle of Saraighat. The title *Sagar-ichari* also is used by Achyutananda Samudra-khari's descendants.

At the end of the original manuscript of *Assam Buranji, S.M.* there are a few folios devoted to a description of the official functions of Daivajnas or astrologers. This portion has been omitted in the printed chronicle, as it had been incorporated earlier in *Deodhai Assam Buranji*, pp. 151-155, paragraphs 291-301. It deals with the part played by Daivajnas in military operations during the conflicts with the Moguls. Astrologers were first stationed with the Ahom monarch at the capital, and later, the officers serving in Lower Assam had trained astrologers attached to their respective establishments as they had to be frequently consulted as to the prospects of the Ahom army in different engagements. Thus astrologers became an indispensable part of the establishments of the leading administrators stationed in different localities. In 1539 *saka*, or 1637 A.D., King Pratap Singha, sent two astrologers, Nahar and Kalia, to the main theatre of war at Samdhara. The Ahom army, acting in obedience to the astrological mandates of the two Daivajnas, won the field. The king, being pleased, issued an order that the calculations of the astrologers were to be implicitly obeyed. During the conflicts with Mir Jumla, Ram Singha and Mansur Khan, expert astrologers were attached to the different divisions of the Ahom army. During Mir Jumla's invasion, King Jayadhwaj Singha allotted Birat and Bharual to the Ahom army; during Ram Singha's war, King Chakradhwaj Singha placed the services of Saru-oja, Ram-khari and *Kavi Saraswati* at the disposal of the Gauhati commanders. During Nawab Mansur Khan's time, Birat was allotted to Solal Bargohain; Samudra-khari and Jyotirbhushan to Chetia Bander Barphukan; Ram-khari to Deka-phukan, grandson of Pikchai; Nitai

Daivajna of Bharual family to the Charingia Phukan; Bijoy-khari of Nahar's family to the Buragohain; Arjun to the Paniphukan; Kanu to Chengrai Phukan; and Rudra-khari to the Namdangia Phukan. Some years later, on the representation of the Gargayan Sandikoi Phukan that Gauhati was a strategic centre requiring the presence of expert astrologers, King Gadadhar Singha transferred the following five Daivajnas to the Gauhati establishment,—Nahar, Kalia, Bharual, Jyotirbhushan and Ram-khari.

From the chronicle-extract reproduced in Srijut Kirtinath Bardoloi's *Sandipika*, pp. 17-18, it appears that Achyutananda Doloi, who belonged to the Kalia Daivajna family, was appointed astrologer-in-chief in the establishment of Lachit Barphukan with the title of *Bar-doloi*. He had eleven Pati-dolois or junior astrologers under him, belonging to the following families,—Kapou, Bharual, Nahar, Ramkhari, Rudrakhari, Nitai, Raumuria, Uzir, Dharamsil, Birat, and Bijoykhari. Being agitated at the delay in announcing the auspicious moment for an attack, Lachit Barphukan threatened the astrologer, saying,—“I have beheaded my maternal uncle, and I shall behead a Brahman Ganak as well.” Achyutananda sanctified the guns by uttering upon them *mantras* or spells to ensure their accurate hitting of the objectives aimed at. After the victory at Saraighat, Lachit Barphukan extended the jurisdiction of Assam to the river Manaha. Achyutananda was given the following rewards by the Ahom monarch,—the title of *Samudra-khari*, a pair of *gamkharu* or jewelled bangles, a sacred thread of gold, and the daughter of Aladibari Gosain of Kamrup to wife, and 120 families of slaves as part of the marriage gifts. The eleven Patidolois were promoted to the rank of Bardolois. These twelve families of Bardolois were entitled to *gaurab* and honour at the court of the Ahom monarch. The descendants of Achyutananda Doloi are still to be found in the village Kurua on the north bank nearly opposite to Gauhati. Achyutananda was a profoundly learned man; according to Srijut-Kirtinath Bardoloi, he wrote a number of astronomical

treatises in Sanskrit,—*Horasfuta*, *Trisira*, etc., and the following longer poems in Assamese,—*Kurmabali-badh*, *Jagad-bali*, *Bali-Sugrib*, *Vyasasram*, etc. It may be mentioned that Mr. Kirtinath Bardoloi, author of *Sandipika*, is seventh in descent on the male line, from Achyutananda Doloi.

In the light of the facts revealed in the chronicles mentioned above, we are led to the conclusion that Churamani, also known as Samudra Churamani, was no other than Achyutananda Doloi; and that before the conferment of the title of *Samudra-khari* by Swargadeo Udayaditya Singha, Achyutananda had been popularly known as Churamani for his astronomical learning, and as Kavi Saraswati for his poetical talents. There are many instances of the wider use of titular names to the exclusion of the original names. Another eminent Daivajna, Balodeva, author of the metrical chronicle *Darrang-ri-ransavali*, is more universally known as *Surya-khari* Daivajna; and the name Balodeva has been relegated to obscurity and oblivion. From the prominence given to Achyutananda Doloi in *Assam Buranji*, S.M., the first-hand character of the narration, and the insertion of the account of the official functions of Daivajnas appended to that chronicle, I have a feeling that Achyutananda Doloi was also the compiler of that chronicle; but I must wait for further evidence to raise this assumption to the position of an incontrovertible fact.

The Daivajnas of Assam have contributed a great deal to the uplift of their motherland, mainly in the cultural and political spheres; and a few distinguished names may be mentioned as examples: Srijut Harakanta Majindar Barua Sadar-amin of Sonamua family, author of *Assam Buranji*, published by the D.H.A.S.; Rai Bahadur Srijut Madhab Chandra Bardoloi of Rudra-khari family, the editor and publisher of Madhab Kandali's *Ramayana* in Assam; Srijut Malbhog Barua of Sarumelia family, pioneer tea planter; Srijut Radhanath Changkakati of Chakradhar family, founder of the English weekly "Times of Assam"; Srijut Rajani-

kanta Bardoloi of Bijoykhari family, premier Assamese novelist; Srijut Nabin Chandra Bardoloi of Rudrakhari family, a patriot and a man of letters; Srijut Kirtinath Bardoloi, a reputed musician, versed both in the theory and practice of the art, and a man of letters; Mrs. Nalinibala Devi of Rudrakhari family, poetess; and Srijut Gopinath Bardoloi of Uzir family, the present Prime Minister of Assam under the Government of India Act of 1935.—*S. K. Bhuyan*, 23—12—1946.

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